Melody Maker

GLASTONBURY 97

Scary shit. . .

GLASTONBURY 97

Deep shit!

Talk about a dirty weekend! This year's Glastonbury was the muddiest, messiest festival in living memory, with torrential rain turning half the site into a swamp before most festival goers had even arrived. Once there, however, the ladies and gentlemen of The Kids threw caution to the (galeforce) wind, summoned up plenty of Dunkirk spirit and carried on having a wail of time regardless.

And despite the filth, the scheduling chaos on the second stage, the mass loss of dignity and the crushing disappointment (hem hem) of Steve Winwood's no-show, Glastonbury '97 will loom long in the memory for plenty of other reasons. The showmanship of Beck. The brilliance of Radiohead in full flight. The Prodigy snatching musical victory from the jaws of technical defeat. The indefatigable madness of the after-hours sound systems. The crazy scenes on the festival fringe that make a slog off the beaten track worthwhile. The new friends located in the mire. The pure, simple joy of arriving home, having survived the whole damn thing, muddied but unbowed.

As ever, Melody Maker was there, forsaking the sanctuary of the backstage compound to put the muck into mucking in and compile this, the biggest, fastest, best insight into the legendary Glasto "vibe" ever created.

The mud. The sweat. The beers. It's all here. Dive in, why dontcha. . .

Funky shit. . .

Ball Boy: **BEN MYERS** Best Girl: **LILI WILDE**

THE BEAN AGE

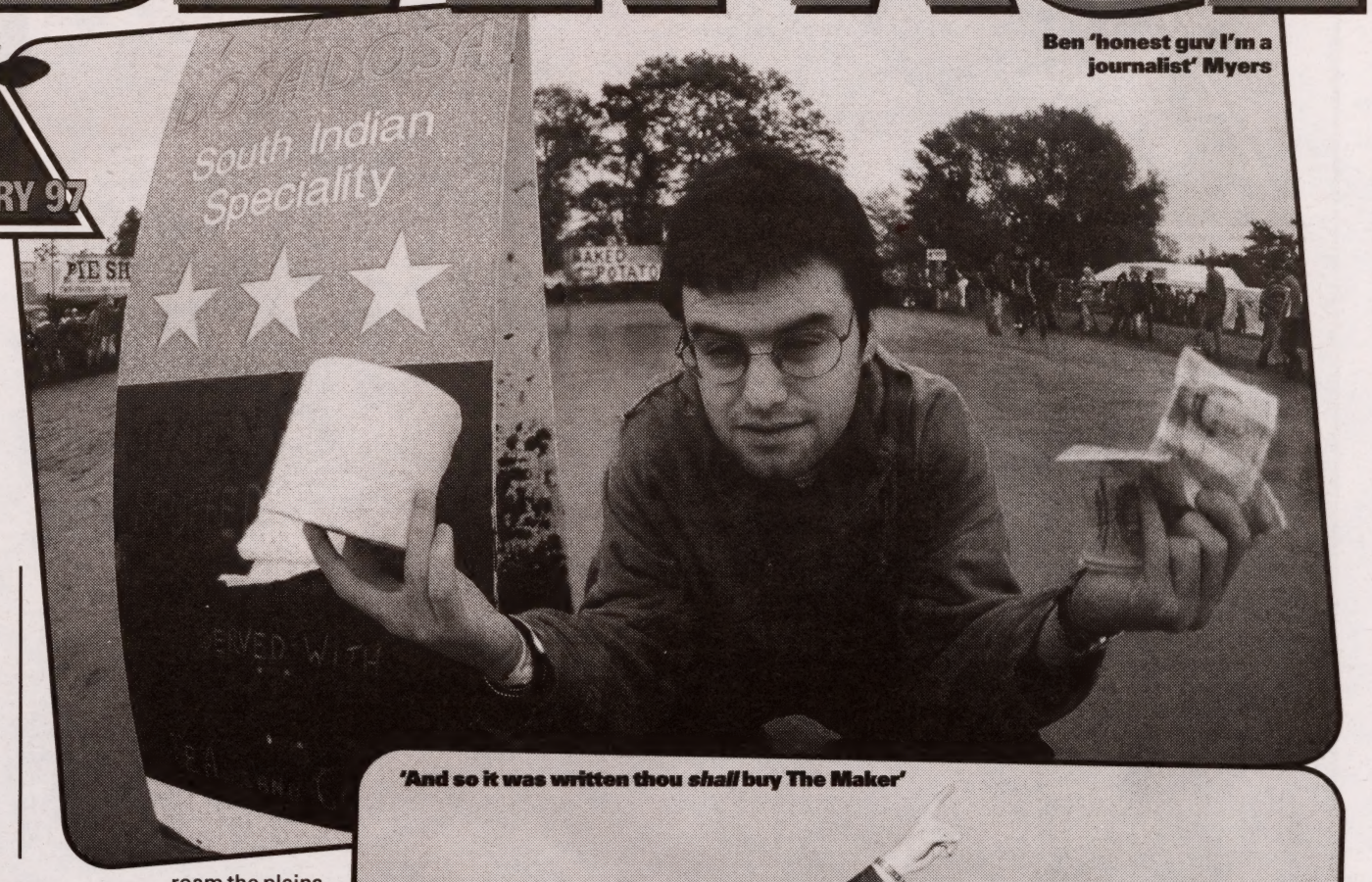
Here's a good one. Pick a little fella, make sure he's a Glasto Virgin, load him up with sweets then pack him off to Somerset to find out what Glasters is really like. Yeeesss. . .

GLASTONBURY 97

The day before the festival started, security reported one man lying down in six inches of mud moo-ing like a cow. 'He was tripping his head off', said a spokesman. **(The Guardian, news story, June 1997)**

FOR various inexplicable reasons I have never been to Glastonbury. Sure, I'd been to all the other festivals, bought the T-shirt, grown a goatee and sang Bob Dylan songs around a camp fire but that was nothing really. Everyone was telling me that Glastonbury was the Big Mama of festivals, the only one which really mattered, the one where anything can happen and which was the true spiritual home of the nations freaks, drop-outs and all-round *unhinged*. It's the place where even if you arrived calm, sober and sane you would undoubtedly leave with your wig well and truly flipped. "Better check it out then," I thought. . .

The only way to really pop my Glasters cherry and experience such a carnival of absurdities was to stay for three days and live the life completely. I'm not talking namby-pamby, back-slapping, well-trimmed, clean'n'tidy back stage area here. 'Hell no,' I cried, 'If I must do this Glastonbury thang I shall be down with The Kids and therefore must roam the plains of Pilton for three days laden in beads, flowers, fungi and falafel. Oh yes.' Well, not quite actually but a bit of good old grass-roots, down-to-earth slumming it wouldn't go amiss. And there was to be none of this watching bands nonsense, that could be done at other times. "Yeah. . ." I thought, "I wanna be a full-on, hardcore, more than mad for it, double nutty Glastonbury maniac. I *am* going to do it." But as I get bored easily, the idea of sitting cross-legged in the "Jerry Garcia's Death Was A Conspiracy, I Tell You" Field while all around me small children regurgitate mung bean and cauliflower burgers just was not appealing. What would be good, however, would be to try to infiltrate the minds of a few of the Glastonbury faces and, who knows, maybe get completely mashed along the way. The Maker set themselves a series of tasks which come rain, wind or mud were going to be completed.



Ben 'honest guv I'm a journalist' Myers

'And so it was written thou *shall* buy The Maker'

'Right, mission possible is to find a hippy. . .'

If they were bottles of Vodka he'd catch the f*ers**

1) JUGGLING

JUGGLING? Piece of piss mate. I grabbed my balls (ho-ho – the only thing that I find good about juggling is the amount of crap puns it offers) and got on down to the Avalon Field. Watching four youngsters in hats throw clubs and balls to each other might be your idea of fun but it certainly ain't mine, somehow though I managed to pick up the gist of it. It went something like this:

Step 1. Throw first object in the air.

Step 2. Throw second object in the air.

Step 3. Catch first object in other hand whilst throwing third object in the air.

Step 4. F*** up.

Step 5. Take a large swig of an alcoholic beverage of your choice.

Then take another. Repeat steps 1 to 5 until you are either proficient at juggling or far too smashed to care that you look like a tit and feel the onslaught of punches which will inevitably reign down upon you from more discerning punters. Try this for a number of hours in the main area and you should hopefully soon realise that juggling is indeed rather pointless and should only really be reserved for circus folk, travelling tinkers and the privacy of your own home. I did and quickly searched for far more productive things like. . .

2) SELLING TOILET PAPER

SELLING toilet paper is one of the ultimate ways to get back to basics by satisfying the needs of your fellow brothers and sisters by providing them with the necessary apparatus to ensure that the joining of man and nature really is a beautiful, nay, spiritual, experience. But no. Not even at Glastonbury does the hand of generosity stretch that far. If there's no such thing as a free lunch then there's definitely no such thing as a free shit. Wherever there is demand there is supply and wherever there is supply there are Scousers in Hugo Boss who'll sort you out with anything. Toilet roll mate? A fiver to you.

You have to hand it to them though, these chaps successfully persuade you to part with a deep sea diver in exchange for some glorified sandpaper. They know what they are doing. I spent an hour wandering between the Jazz Stage and the Circus Area flaunting my wares to no avail. I moved over to Big Ken's Kebabs and Rizla stall thinking that the moment that 100 chilli rushes kicked in I myself would be quids in. No luck. In the end I gave most of it away to a wizened old dear with a twitch and cheese-cloth shirt. From East Anglia I believe.

3) SCALING THE FENCE

THIS is a hard one. Your humble correspondent was happy to attempt any tasks given to him and easily slipped into the role of Glasto Nuttah as required but the idea of climbing three fences seemed a bit pointless, especially as I was already in the site, had a wrist band and wanted my ankles to remain intact. However for the sake of trying to infiltrate the psyche of the festival maniac I decided to climb over the

FANCLUB!

'Nah, no hippies in there either. . .'

Ben, that is sick

fence *out* of the main arena. I couldn't even do that. Contrary to popular festival stories I wasn't stopped by burly security guards who roughed me up and sent me packing, nor was I cheered on by a large crowd of friendly anarchists who were happy to see me getting one over on Thatcher or something. No, instead I struggled through some rather tame brambles and then scrambled up an eight-feet mesh fence beside a smelly stream only to get a thorn in my index finger and subsequently nearly scuffed my brand new pair of brothel creepers. Being a Glasters maniac isn't easy you know. . .

4) PREACHING THE GOSPEL

TRUE to Glastonbury form, this year's festival was about far more than music. It's these little details that make it what it is. If you were there you may well have walked past a man on stilts or a woman with green hair down to her knees and barely even batted an eyelid. Glastonbury has that effect on you; traditional concepts of the absurd are thrown out of the window as the "anything goes" lifestyle cruises through the front door. What is usually considered ridiculous in the "real world" is, for one weekend, the norm. For example, I wandered from stage to stage dressed in a brown fur coat (borrowed from Maker photographer Lili Wilde) a black PVC hat (bought for three pounds from a Rasta from Birmingham) and a pair of wellies (borrowed from the keyboard player from Reef – cheers) and felt slightly underdressed. Within hours of arriving on the site I had abandoned all my conceptions of cool, smashed the pathetic facade of capitalist conformity and liberated myself of the shackles which restrain us in a society that continues frowns upon individuality. Or maybe I was just drunk. To be honest, I don't actually remember.

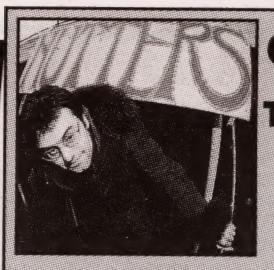
Just to check that this theory was true I dressed up as a clergyman and barked out names and numbers from my phone book in the style of a Deep South Pentecostal minister to a gathering of dining people. "Praise the Lord for his word is the truth, mum and dad 0191-384. . ." or 'Repent ye sinners for the gospel doth say Luton Airport 01582. . .' Guess what? No one batted an eyelid. No one said, "What the hell are you *doing* little man?" No one even contested that my improvised epistles were nonsense or the fact that a real priest would probably never have a half-empty bottle of Absolut vodka in his back pocket. Or would he?I love this place.

5) NAKED IN THE GREEN FIELD

THE Green Field is situated well away from the main stages and host to all the Class A clowns. As it was my first time I at least expected to see some naked romps in the UHU Glue-style Glasters mud. You know the type of thing: a van load of real Cornish crusties mud wrestling; the obligatory naked and sun-burnt fat bloke or even some Krishnas doing a funny little jig with bells on their toes. Maybe it was because of the weather or perhaps it was because it was too early/too late in the day but I saw NO NAKED HIPPIES. Very disappointing I know, and not one to be accused of setting a perverse trend, I willingly declined to strip off and race around on all fours with a solitary red rose clenched between my mud-splashed buttocks. We can all breath a sigh of relief over that one. . .

AND with my Glastonbury cherry popped, peeled and eaten I strolled off into the Somerset sunset safe in the knowledge that I too, for at least a few days, was a NUTTER. Give it a whirl why dontcha?

Ah, ain't he cute. . .



GOD BLESS 'EM

THE MAKER'S GUIDE TO THE REAL NUTTERS OF GLASTONBURY 1997

For legal reasons all names have been changed, made up or completely forgotten. To the real people who were dedicated to providing the strangest of entertainment (whether intentionally or not). . .we salute you!

'BINDLE', (27, London)
Bindle is a member of the Travelling Trapeze Company and hurls herself around at great heights at festivals for a living. She had been at Glastonbury for a whole week performing twice-daily on the company's specially constructed trapeze. She even hung upside down in the air whilst holding me six feet off the ground as we swung about. She is a nutter, a nice one, but a nutter all the same.

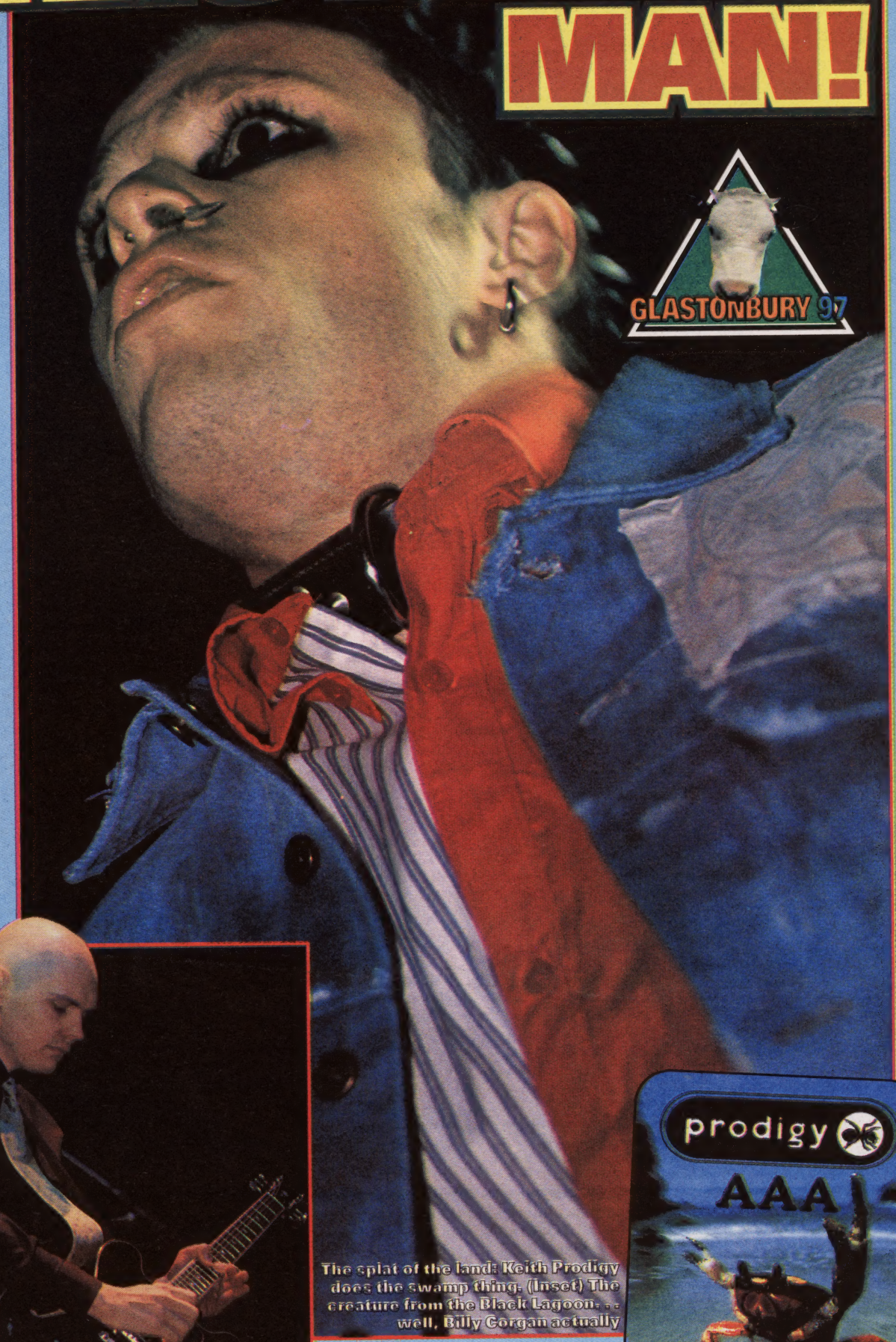
'THREE', (age unknown, place of residence unknown)
We came across 'Three' wandering about near the Circus Tent. Clad in space-age clothing, painted green from head to toe and clutching a funnel which was attached to his tail, he got earned this name because he responded to all our questions by raising three fingers and grinning inanely. Rumours that 'Three' was the Pilton Conservative representative in the recent elections were completely false. Nutter.

'THE TEA LADIES' (late forties, Somerset)
The Tea Ladies were spotted walking the festival site pushing a tea caddie and dressed in full make-up, head scarves and slippers yet told everyone that they didn't have any tea for sale. What they were doing is anyone's guess but they do qualify as being up there with the best of the insane.

'DARREN' (28, Swansea)
Darren is a member of the "Dynamix" troupe from Wales. What they did exactly was hard to tell but it went something like this: approximately 20 people stand holding a massive circular sheet. They wave it up and down over the heads of a small group of people huddled together. They count backwards from 10. They cheer. Darren emerges with a rather cute lamb hand puppet. They cheer. We leave.

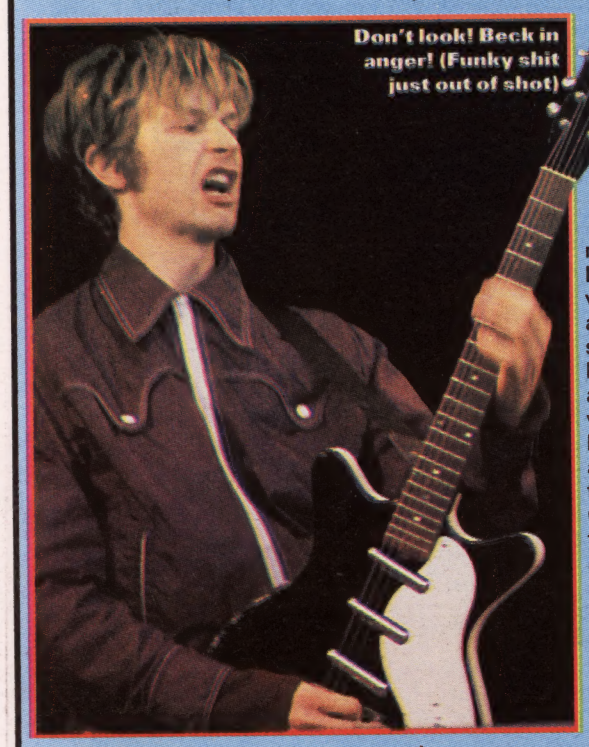
'THE SPACE CADETS'
The Space Cadets were everywhere but this particular couple qualify for having matching blond dreadlocks which stretched to their waists and eyes like giant saucers. No conversation was necessary. . . we just *knew.*

IT'S GETTING WETTER, MAN!



FRIDAY
MAIN STAGE

ALL that terrible weather. All that rained-off talent left to kick its heels in frustration. All those paying customers left with nothing to do but hope for an outbreak of Dunkirk spirit and the inevitable impromptu singalong that goes with it. But – hey! – enough about Wimbledon, let's talk Glastonbury...


Don't look! Beck in anger! (Funky shit just out of shot)

Well, believe it or not, substitute black for white in the recommended dress code and you won't find much else to choose between the two events this weekend. After all, both stubbornly rely upon grass as a surface. Both are run with one eye on the old traditions and the other on the commercial concerns of the Nineties. And both, it would seem, are increasingly populated by dim poshoes on the jolly while more genuine punters struggle to meet ticket prices.

And, certainly, both events are given equal prominence on this morning's calamitous weather reports, which just goes to show how established Glastonbury now is in the British summer season. But, with a year off and a decade of sun-drenched festivals behind them, the question is: can The Kids still handle it?

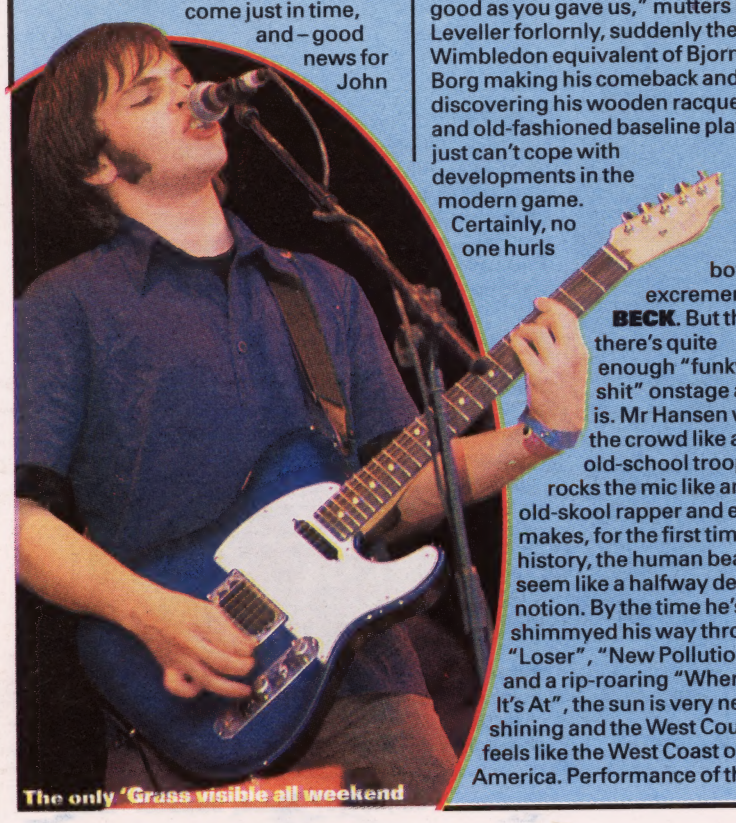
Well, perhaps the only slice of luck Glastonbury enjoys this weekend is the fact that this is officially the first New Grave festival. The Britpop kids of two years ago would surely have perished by some time on Thursday evening, but it's not just tennis players who don't wear Fred Perry's any more. The current fashion rehabilitation of The Big Coat has come just in time, and – good news for John McEnroe – you now *can* be serious. Anyone 4 Real Tennis? Oh, go on then...

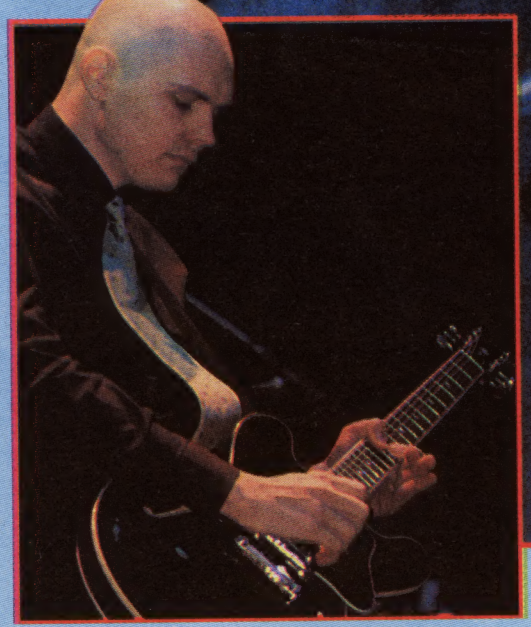
And, talking of Big Coats, Glasto '97 sees the return of the Mac in more ways than one. Because here come **ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN** with their first Glastonbury appearance since 1984 when, coincidentally I don't think, the weather made this weekend look like a summer's day in Hawaii. Perhaps that's why Ian McCulloch swaggers through a set of fabulous classics ("The Killing Moon", "The Back Of Love"), almost-as-wonderful new material ("Nothing Lasts Forever") and vintage lip ("It's just a f***ing TV camera, stop acting like knobheads") with the air of a Grand Slam veteran giving young bucks the run-around at an exhibition tournament. Certainly, by the time they shiver through a singularly inappropriate "Do It Clean", what's already the least embarrassing rock comeback of all time has made another great leap forward.

Great leaps upwards, however, is where **TERRORVISION** are "at". They are the band that likes to go "BOOOIIING!", so "Oblivion" and "Perseverance" fizz with sufficient element-defying bravado to make the mud-bound moshpit rather ill-advisedly attempt to follow suit.

Still, at least that muddies people up in time for **THE LEVELLERS**. They should be in their element, of course, but in their absence, things – even Glastonbury – have moved on. In years gone by, their practically medieval combination of fol-de-rol fiddling and round-the-campfire dittying would have been the hit of the day. Now it's just the soundtrack to a load of cidered-up festival monsters figuring out that you can *throw* mud as well as wallow in it.

"I hope you give Beck as good as you gave us," mutters Mark Leveller forlornly, suddenly the rock Wimbledon equivalent of Bjorn Borg making his comeback and discovering his wooden racquet and old-fashioned baseline play just can't cope with developments in the modern game. Certainly, no one hurls bovine excrement at **BECK**. But then there's quite enough "funky shit" onstage as it is. Mr Hansen works the crowd like an old-school trooper, rocks the mic like an old-skool rapper and even makes, for the first time in history, the human beatbox seem like a halfway decent notion. By the time he's shimmyed his way through "Loser", "New Pollution" and a rip-roaring "Where It's At", the sun is very nearly shining and the West Country feels like the West Coast of America. Performance of the weekend, by an acre. Oh I say!

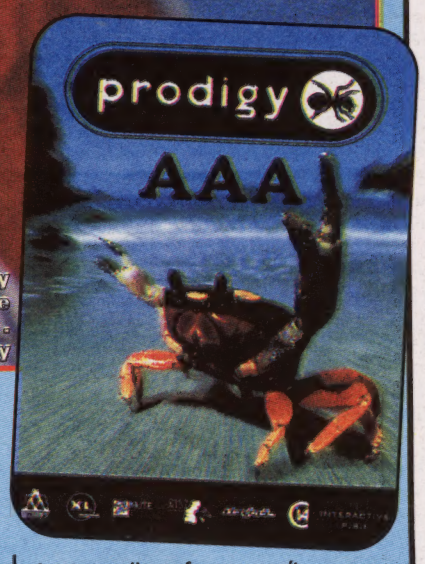

The only 'Grass visible all weekend



Which leaves **SUPERGRASS** looking, well, a tad on the dull side, actually. True, "Alright" and "Caught By The Fuzz" still crackle with good vibes, but newer songs like "It's Not Me" and "Richard III" struggle beneath the weight of their own self-conscious "maturity". It's hard to understand why a band who can sound so young and full of life should dedicate so much time to trying to sound old and boring. In tennis terms, they really need to decide whether they want to be Martina Hingis (potential fulfilled at 16, and quite foxy with it) or Jennifer Capriati (talent flushed down toilet thanks to growing up too fast).

No such problems for **SMASHING PUMPKINS**, who know precisely where they're going and are going there very loudly indeed. Billy Corgan – the man who made grunge pretentious – is now using New Grave as an excuse to turn the Pumpkins into full on Gothic gonks, replete with swirls of cathedral-like sonic majesty etc. But no tunes. Which means, ultimately, it's a bit like watching one of those big-serving Eastern European tennis pros: technically impressive but, ultimately, unengaging.

The splat of the land: Keith Prodigy does the swamp thing. (Inset) The creature from the Black Lagoon... well, Billy Corgan actually



And so, finally, we come to **THE PRODIGY**. And, what with their parent-scaring attitude, incessant swearing and onstage tantrums it's clear their tennis role model is none other than Mr McEnroe. They're even introduced by Merchant Of Menace-soundalike Dennis Pennis who describes them as "the best Prodigy tribute band in the world".

And, for two songs, it seems like he might not be joking. A desperately limp "Smack My Bitch Up" (Ooh mummy! Nasty man say rude word!) and a well wonky "Voodoo People" is followed by Maxim exploding "What the f*** was that?" and stalking off stage, followed by the rest of the band. Confusion – and silence – then reigns for nigh-on 20 minutes. Assuming we can rule out a new "ambient" direction, and judging by the frantic activity on the stage, a technical hitch is to blame but, without an announcement to that effect, the long-suffering punters understandably become restless. Eventually, however, the chants of "Prodigy RIP" are silenced by the re-appearance of Pennis who re-unites the crowd with a Hebrew chant singalong. Funny, he doesn't *look* like Cliff Richard from down here. Consequently, when The Prodge DO come back on, the crowd breathe new life into the phrase "mad for it".

Just as well too, for you can't help but wonder whether closer examination of "Firestarter" and Maxim's pantomime stage banter might not just reveal the same novelty rave-up gubbins they were pilloried for at the time of "Charley".

Of course, nowadays, image is everything, but without the talent to back it up, you can end up more Jeff Tarango (crap bloke better known for his "controversial" outbursts than his tennis) than John McEnroe (genius, whether serving or swearing). Not that it matters particularly tonight, where the sight of several mad blokes cavorting to some nosebleed punk techno is more than enough to justify their Number One seeding.

"This is dangerous!" insists Maxim prior to a sky-raising finale of L7's "Fuel My Fire" but really, he's fooling no one. The Prodigy are still a great pop group, Glastonbury is still a great festival but, tonight at least, neither can really lay claim to being anything more subversive.

New balls please.

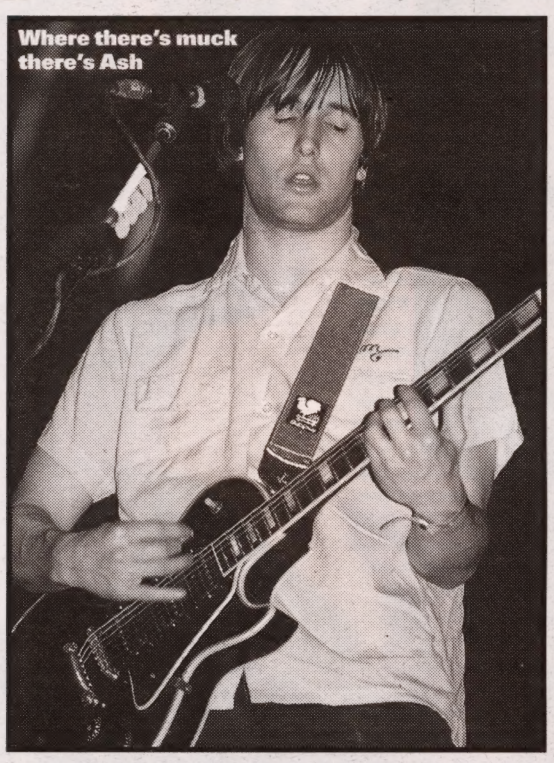
MARK SUTHERLAND

SECOND STAGE

"MUD, mud, glorious mud. Nothing quite like it for cooling the blood."

Well, for those of us unfortunate enough to have slipped over and fallen, left to wallow in three inches of effluent like dying salmons, yeah, consider ours cooled.

Eight hours of waiting for the bands to come on after, we are told, the second stage started to sink into the swamp this morning (which brings a whole new meaning to the word "stagediving"). Eight hours of trying to maintain your balance, drink, smoke, juggle, fondle strangers and summon aliens from the skies (whatever, this *is* Glastonbury,



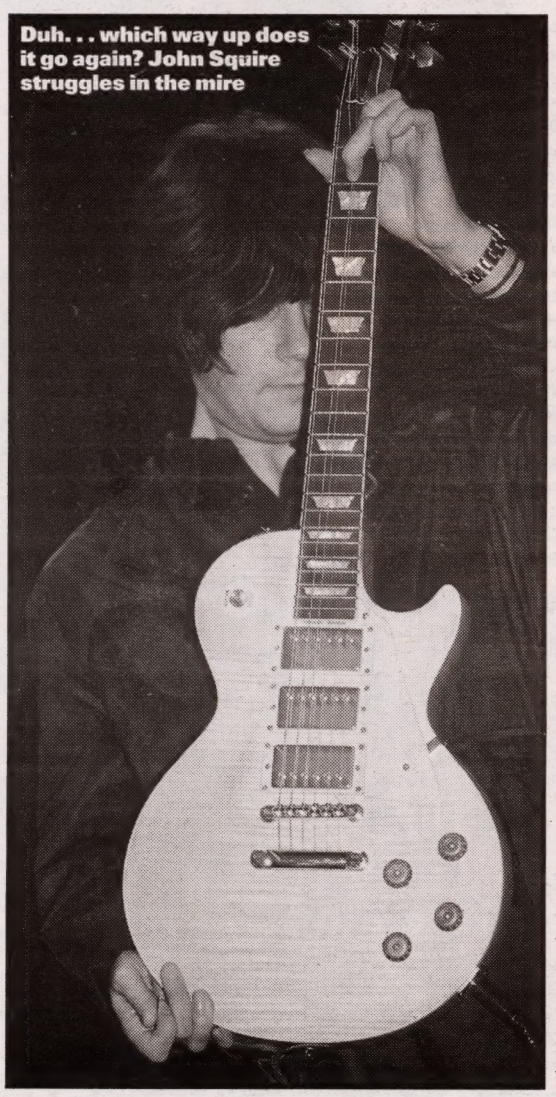
Where there's muck there's Ash

and if it helps pass the time...) Sure, we could go and check out some pyramid stage action, get our nipples pierced or go and eat some sludge wrapped in filth but, instead, we just stand here, fend off bizarre Eastern religions and stare at the stage in the vain hope that **EMBRACE, CATATONIA, KENICKIE, AUDIOWEB, BEN FOLDS FIVE, SNEAKER PIMPS** or **THE DIVINE COMEDY** might show up to entertain the "Apocalypse Now"-style troops. They don't. Eight hours without even f***ing Audioweb and there's been no riot? See? Glastonbury. Everybody's MAD!!!

"There will be no bands on this stage until further notice," yells a frankly offensive voice from the sky. Oh, really? Cos we reckoned you might try to slip one or two on in the hope we wouldn't notice. Cuh! The arena starts to empty as, one by one, even the most diehard of martyrs gather up their last remaining vestiges of self-respect and seek out something worth paying £75 for. But, what's this? Could that be a small, abridged chapter of **MY LIFE STORY** here to drum up some morale? Bugger, it is, and a dramatically reduced crowd flops its way back towards the stage to catch even just a moment of music. Any music. In fact, we get four songs, songs of happiness and dryness and warmth and excitement and feeling young, free and alive. Jake may as well have thrown a rubber ring out into the crowd because, this evening, he's a flaming lifesaver.

PLACEBO, the first band to play a full set, aren't quite so giving. "I've just broken my guitar," growls Brian Molko. "And I blame every single one of you!" Oops. Sorry. But no one wants froth and frolics from Placebo. No, we want hacksaw slices through pop, biological sections to see what makes it tick, what makes it bleed. And that's exactly what we get tonight. Sure, their music doesn't go anywhere, each song starting and finishing with the same mechanical rabbit punch, but that's because it needs to be exactly where it is – burning in the pit of your stomach. Tonight, contrived, staged bedroom angst or not, "36 Degrees" feels like the last nail in Glastonbury's hippy coffin; "Bruise Pristine" comes across like the buzz of a wasp, trapped in a jar and mightily pissed off for it; and "Nancy Boy", sassy and bitter, vicious and exhilarating, stakes Placebo's claim to next year's headline spot. Wait for the bang. Tonight, the touch paper was lit.

And then it fizzes out again as **THE SEAHORSES** dribble pub-rock nonsense over it, the sound of their earnest competency making our ears twitchingly fall into a coma. Oh, they're very impressive with their solos and drum fills but, then again, so are those Bavarian "Eurotrash" guests who can fart a hundred great sporting themes. Why would you want to listen to this? Sure, it's a revelation watching John Squire play guitar but it's a drag *hearing* him play. Hell, it doesn't even look like *he's* enjoying this as he sways sulkily to each song. The Seahorses are a rebound thing, I'll wager, and I'd give them two albums tops. For "Moving On", Chris Helme stands with an acoustic guitar and performs solo with the eerie ring of a man preparing himself to go back to busking. But let's leave him to his moment of glory in the safety and comfort of his hippy, progressive, retro, mindless, inane, subhuman, lazy, dreary, uninspired, uninspiring, odious, tepid, muddy rubbish and try and think of some unused adjectives for Reef later. Hmmm...



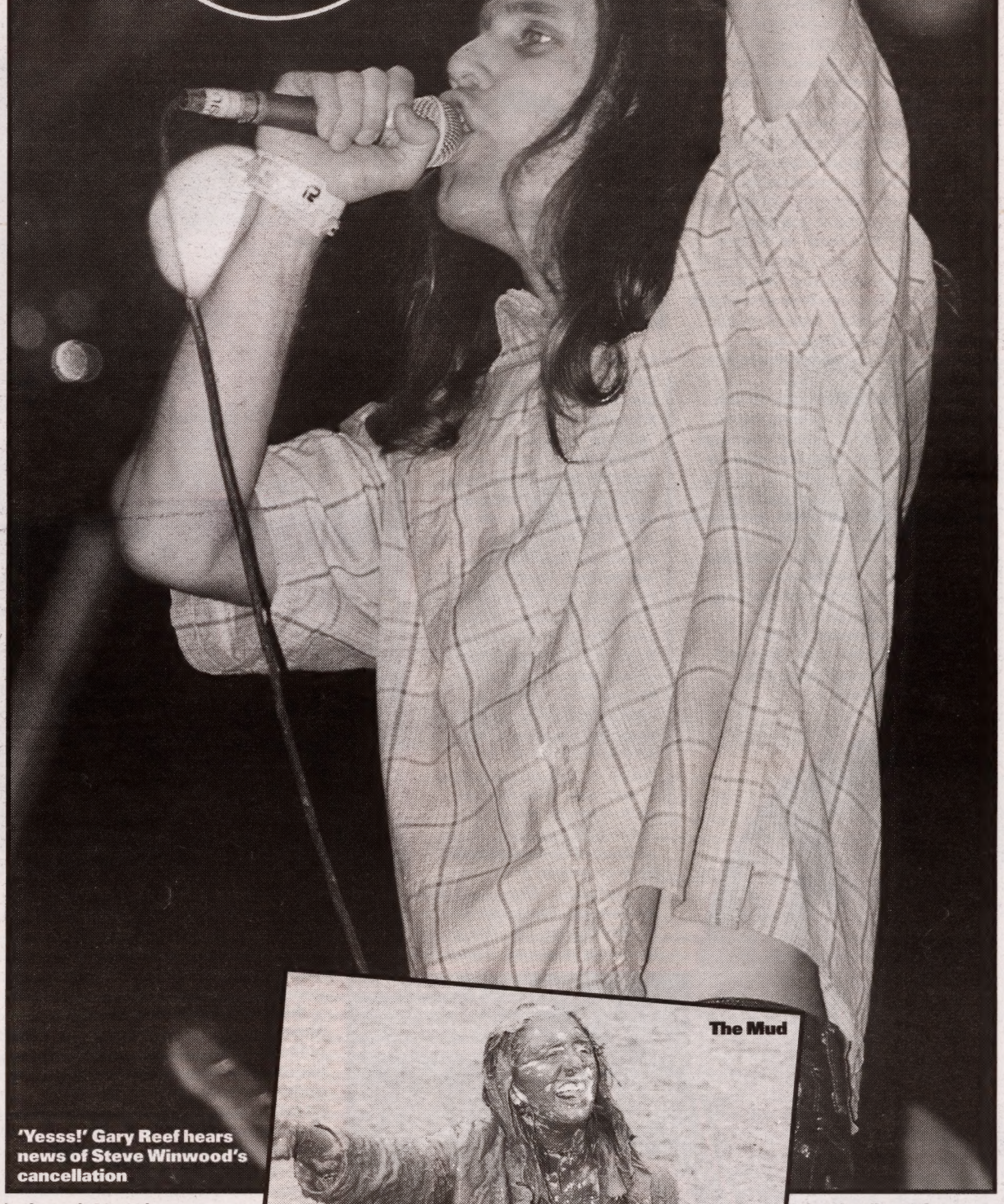
Duh... which way up does it go again? John Squire struggles in the mire

ASH are preceded by a bloke who runs onstage to tell us in a strangulated voice that "Dry skies are coming!" before he's brutally wrestled off by security. Now, *that's* rock'n'roll, and it's a fitting introduction for Ash, the only band thus far to understand that simply standing there and playing as if this were Wednesday night at the Dublin Castle just isn't good enough. Instead, Ash sprint through 14 punk-pop gems, force the kids to dance their legs right into the ground and finally put the "festive" back into this festival as Mark spirals around like an untwisting telephone cord and "Kung Fu" clicks and claps its way towards the back of the field where people are going just as mad as the hysterical fans down the front. Blinder.

And, if Ash provoke fanaticism, **REEF** could take Poland with this crowd behind them. Cheers? Chartered surveyors in Jericho would have wet themselves if they'd ever heard a noise like this. And it's not without due reason. For what they do, Reef are excellent. They're far less puerile than Red Hot Chili Peppers, far more energetic than Free and far less dated than The Black Crowes. But they're far less inviting than they ought to be tonight and those *"Awright"*s and *"Yeah"*s start to come across like the pleadings of a replacement teacher to an unruly class.

Tired after a day of truly hideous conditions, people start to drift away, disappointed that there's no real sense of celebration to be found in Reef, just the manufactured *sound* of celebration. The drive and clamour of "Place Your hands" or "Resignation" simply rings as a hollow "Aren't we having fun now, children?" and we're reminded that, just because it's rock music, doesn't mean it actually ROCKS. A fitting end to a ghastly day, really. Mulch ado about nothing.

ROBIN BRESNARK



(Inset) "'36 Degrees?"' Colder than that surely? Brian Placebo defies the elements

The Mud

'Yesss!' Gary Reef hears news of Steve Winwood's cancellation

TRULY, MUDL

SATURDAY

MAIN STAGE

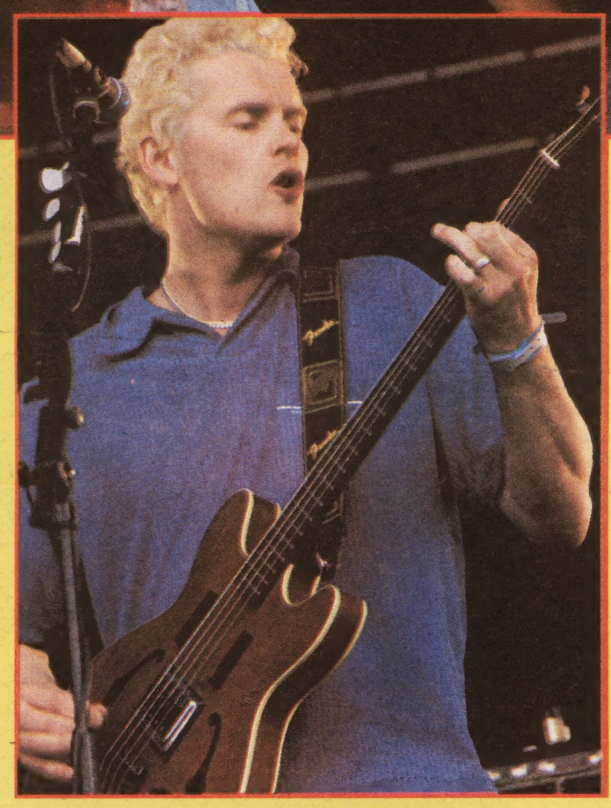
IT'S cold. The skies are leaden as February. The mud is so thick, it's like walking through over-defrosted Black Forest gateau. If it had been a football game, the ref would have taken one look and called the thing off. If it had been tennis, the covers would have been out and Cliff Richard would have been leading us in a spontaneous singsong, keeping our spirits up until conditions improved. We don't get Cliff but we do get **REPUBLICA**, trying to galvanise a hillful of still-catatonic kids scraping the sleep from their eyes and the mud from their boots. "C'mon, show us what the f*** you're made of!" jeers Saffron, gamely, but it's like proposing a game of squash to a stag party the morning after the big do. And yet, buried deep beneath the mud and misery, the green, green spirit of Glasters lingers. The festival has to go on, so it does. The toll on our socks is enormous but we get there. As Crispin of **THE LONGPIGS** observes, "This is all right, innit? It's like a happy version of World War I."

He's right. Your festival needs YOU. But not necessarily The Longpigs. Crispin has a nice line in sardonic detachment and until one of their slower numbers I'd never seen rock fans wave their arms in what was clearly a self-knowing, sarcastic manner before. But, one long, vamped, spat-out Mark E Smith parody apart, none of this dry wit seems to impact on their thunderously conventional sound, each song coming at you like a brown log. "She Said" is OK, but, Crispin old boy, rock genius is not 0 per cent inspiration and 100 per cent bellowing. They can hear at the back. That The Longpigs' bassist wears red trousers says more about them than any close musicological analysis could.

NANCI GRIFFITH skips on and we freak. What's she doing here? She looks like the mum of your best mate whom you might have had a crush on when you were 15. Guilty flashback. Speaking of flashing, what made **RAY DAVIES**, an equally puzzling addition to the line-up, imagine that that seedy white mac would earn him kudos with the kids and not suspicion of loitering with intent in a public place?

CAST are top blokes. Solid. Top. Everyone knows so. Everyone nods along affirmatively to their short-plank Britrock.

Every good boy deserves sludge: OCS and Dodgy add to the Glastonbury noodle mountain



No one freaks out, no one looks too pleasured, they just nod, respectfully, as if knowing that the likes of "Alright" (a good title – "Particularly Good", for instance, would have been a less good title) are pretty bog-standard, but, hey, John Power's a top bloke so we should buy his records just for that. There is, however, one clear source of disgruntlement. Mud is being flung at John Power by an anti-Cast contingent of one, who manages to keep up such a prolific bombardment he must have prepared his arsenal of patties in advance. John Power is sufficiently rattled to dedicate "Free Me" to his tormentor, eventually removed by security. Booo.

Heroes of Bosnia **DODGY** have promised a very, very special guest. Who could this be? Paul McCartney? Slobodan Milosevic? No. It's Ray Davies. Oh. The world's press are underwhelmed. This is 1997. Ray Davies should be full of fear and incomprehension at the rock bands of 1997, not strumming merrily along with them – but Dodgy are like Herman's Hermits, or Bread, making music that could have nestled in the lower divisions of any era. Their fans are a pear-shaped, unlovely-looking bunch who dance like drunken hippos but they're a good-humoured crowd. And while I'd rather snog my dead grandfather than listen to Dodgy as a rule, I find myself smiling as my critical churlishness evaporates in the surprisingly balmy early evening. I mean, folks, come on.

They introduce onstage one Eugene Sciff, a percussionist friend who's been playing gigs to traumatised children in Bosnia. What am I supposed to say? "Well, he's obviously a c***, then!" Good on Dodgy and especially their occasional dubby bits.

OCEAN COLOUR SCENE are peeved at their penultimate billing. They've threatened to "blow away" Radiohead. They've as much chance of doing that as I have of sucking in my cheeks and blowing them, and the main stage, away. In the event, they're upstaged by a glorious mudfight to stage right.

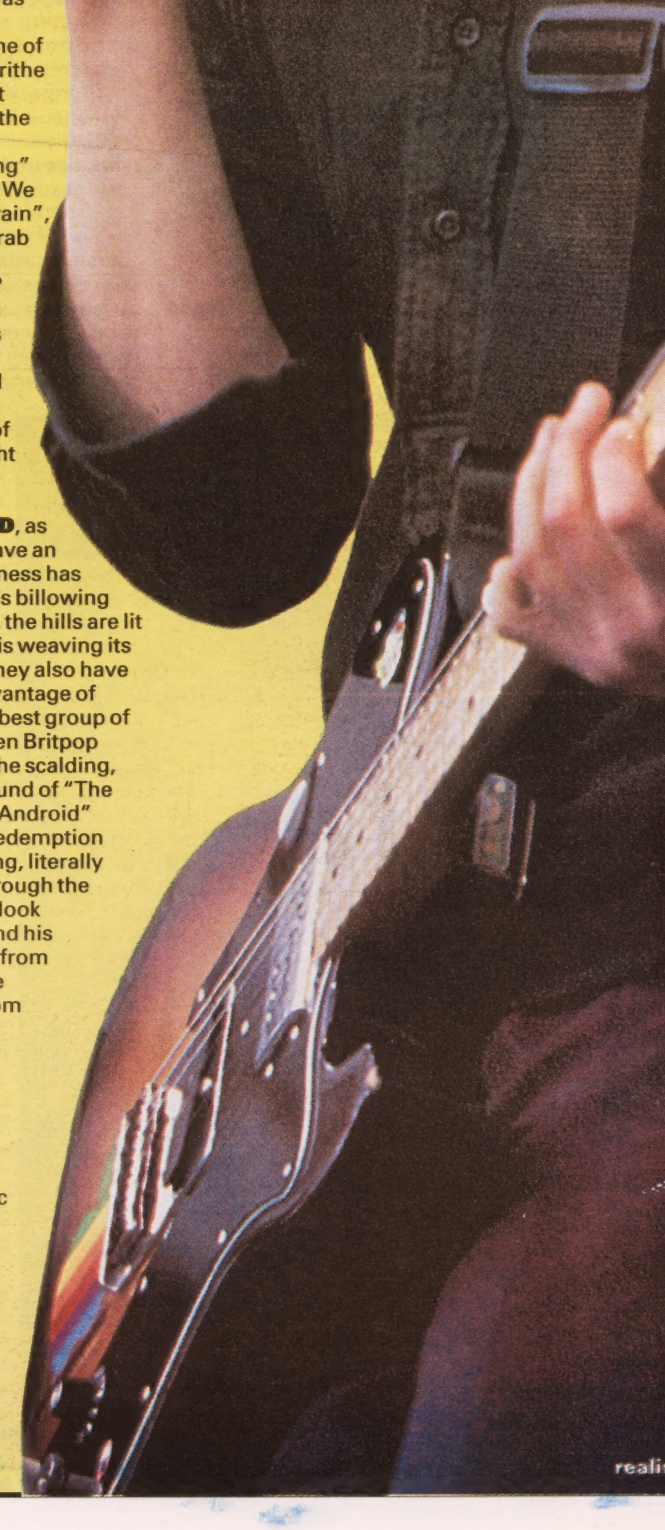
OCS are terrible. They take their Sixties retroism almost to the point of larceny – if I were The Rolling Stones' solicitor I could have listened to their set with great interest but otherwise it was impossible. Watching some of the punters writhe and jerk about deliriously to the likes of "The Riverboat Song" and "The Day We Caught The Train", you want to grab them and say, "You like this? Well, hey, you might like this even better! They're called The Beatles! Never heard of them? Thought not. Give 'em a spin!"

RADIOHEAD, as headliners, have an unfair advantage. Darkness has descended, the dry ice is billowing into the air like incense, the hills are lit with torches, nightime is weaving its misty spell. However, they also have the rather more fair advantage of being far and away the best group of the day. After the lumpen Britpop that's preceded them, the scalding, scathing, cascading sound of "The Bends" and "Paranoid Android" is like a hot shower of redemption after a hard day's wading, literally and metaphorically, through the mud. Thom Yorke may look like a broody chicken and his problems may all stem from a dysfunctional attitude towards women but from such ignominious and unlikely sources spring the lava of rock genius.

Dodgy bill, dodgy weather, and yet somehow I am feeling sublime. Perhaps it's some intangible, mystic element enchanting the atmosphere, a benevolent emanation from the ley-lines or the Tor, perhaps it's the 18 glasses of wine sloshing about inside me. But I'm feeling good...

DAVID STUBBS

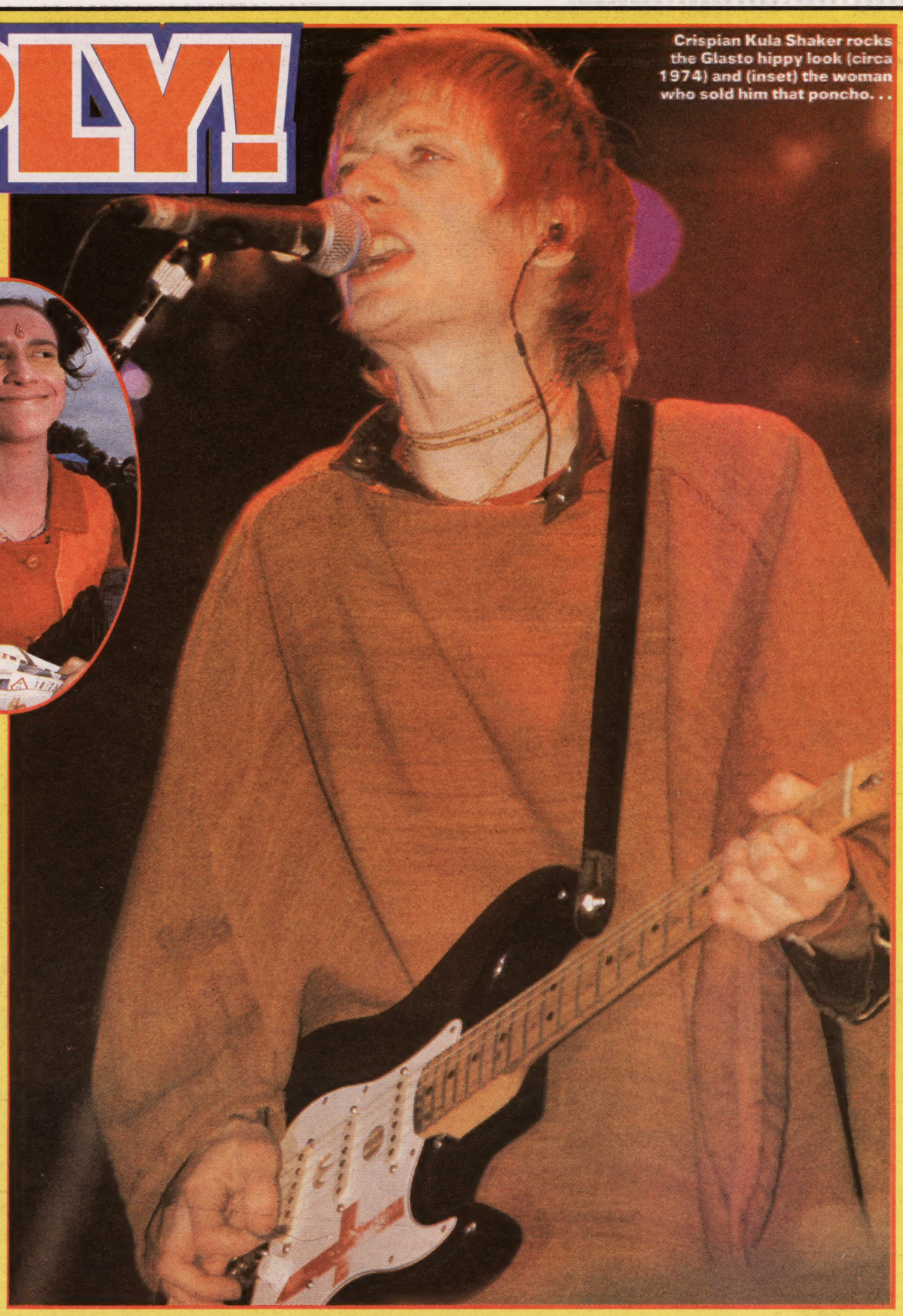
John Power shows off his new curly perm, while, inset, The Levellers show off their new stage gear



Y, DEEPLY!

'Noooo!' Thom Yorke
s he'll miss Sting's set

Crispian Kula Shaker rocks the Glasto hippy look (circa 1974) and (inset) the woman who sold him that poncho. . .



SECOND STAGE

I SWEAR at one desperate point I was ready to donate my still living, breathing body to medical science for just a glimpse of the sun. It was a pretty low point, after watching a mud castle, roughly one metre high, being built right in front of my very eyes by five mud monsters with slime for skin. And then someone on stage tells us that "THE 60FT DOLLS WILL BLOW YOUR TITS OFF".

In the event, the **60FT DOLLS** do not bore me beyond insanity: they are much less compelling than that. The main problem with them is that on a thoroughly grey day, with mud infiltrating every available part of your body, the need is for something to transcend the oppressive environment-, which helps make **GENEVA** truly revelatory. "Into The Blue" is, of course, a moment of extreme purity – the sound of snow in a field of mud. If there is a doubt about them, it's that as a pop group they are evocative and not provocative – meaning that the musical beauty merely compensates for a striking lack of emotional clarity and that frequently Geneva are just one glistening falsetto away from foggy mediocrity.

So spirits are lifted, and **G LOVE AND SPECIAL SAUCE** appear at just the right time. . . but it's dreadful. The whole set is my personal nightmare: some "talented musician" creating a cool vibe, covering Bob Dylan songs, playing his guitar with the same furrowed intensity that a miner might chip away at his coalface and you can just imagine his thoughts – "Hey Man! We're Jammin'!" Words fail me, except the words F*** OFF.

You'll find a lot of people at festivals talking about "context", in the sense that seeing a group at Glastonbury simply cannot compare to seeing them on tour. It is with this in mind that I find myself enjoying **STEREOLAB** for the first time ever, primarily because they are the most important group playing on this stage today, if only because in this context, Stereolab's streamlined discipline, by contrasting so acutely with traditional festival excess, lends them a quiet majesty, manufacturing what I can only term as a huge intimacy.

The same reversal of festival ethos is expected of **DUBSTAR**, who should be the best group on the day. This isn't so much bubblegum-pop, as flavourless chewing gum ground into the pavement on Hemel Hempstead High St. The fault lies completely with Sarah. Whilst their songs do demand a certain chic detachment , this must be met with charm and character. Sarah stands at the microphone with all the vacuous boredom of a Kwiksave shelf stacker: give her a lobotomy and her personality would rocket. Aloof to the point of irrelevance, Dubstar are outshone by shadows.

It's obviously a negative reaction to the cement-thick mud soup, but it takes until 8pm for the second stage to really seize the day. That it does so fully and gladly is down to **NENEH CHERRY**, the first artist to understand properly that this is a festival, the punters are pissed off and they need some. . . RELEASE! "Crack Baby" is pulsating but harrowing, Neneh's mid-birth grunts combining perfectly with new-born baby screams: as a vocal performance it's astonishing. "Manchild" and "Buffalo Stance" are both wonderful: the former mocking but tender, the latter a bollock-bashing landslide of spitting aggression. In terms of style, movement, urgency and an intuitive desire to CREATE HAVOC she is the star of the day.

And so, **THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS**. Strange how a hatred for the vast majority of dance music seems curiously like a confession, as though, as a genre, it has unalterable value and those who object on principle are ostracised to such a degree that The Elephant Man would sympathise. The basic mistake so much of dance acts make is that they extend the void created by the general absence of lyrics to include performance and personality, when the reality is that the less you actually say in music the more you must physically or visually do to sustain interest. Only The Prodigy currently respect this.

Tom Chemical: In the middle of something special (arf!)

The crowd go mental, as they were always going to, and from any distance the light show is scintillating – I've never seen a UFO, but at least I now know what to look out for – but, I wonder, is anyone actually watching The Chemical Brothers? So detached is the sound from any concept of physical performance, it is rent-a-rave: all that matters is that the sound is coming from someone somewhere. It leaves The Chemical Brothers nowhere...or at least, nowhere interesting.

The headliners come on, and you know who it is, don't you? Heaven forbid that I would discourage anyone in their hatred of **KULA SHAKER**, nor suggest for one second that he is anything other than a worthless buffoon, but one issue must be addressed: the whole notion of Crispian being a middle-class wanker. Listen, just as there is nothing inherently noble or valiant about being working class, so there is nothing essentially diabolical about being middle class. The argument is lazy and harmful and, further, it detracts from Kula Shaker's primary awfulness, namely: the songs.

They play "Tattva" and I want to bury my head in my hands. They play "Hey Dude" and I want to bury my head in the mud. But The Kids love it. . . or do they? Half the people who saw The Chemical Brothers have left and those who have stayed pay Kula Shaker mild appreciation – certainly, as a celebration, it whimpers badly, especially when up against Radiohead on the main stage.

I find Kula Shaker difficult because I don't believe in the value of spirituality, not when it is so strongly associated with retreating from the world. Crispian is an escapist, and escapism is cultural obliteration. When the real world crumbles around him he'll be singing "Kum-By-Ah", unable and unwilling to lift a finger to help.

What do Kula Shaker say about living in Britain in 1997?

Less than nothing.

DANIEL BOOTH

SUNDAY MUDDY SUNDAY!

Mark Bluetone cuts some mud while (inset) Paul Mansun looks out at the wide open space

SUNDAY
MAIN STAGE

WELLIES, check. Umbrella, check. "News Of The World" (doubles as scandal sheet *and* groundsheet), check. Bad mood, check. Emergency barbers and beard trimmers, check. Machine gun, sadly no check. Bank managers in pointy orange hats. Mental health check. Seas of mud. Yup, this must be Glastonbury. The weather is one thing but, despite our team-issued Maker Hack all-weather gear, nothing could have prepared us for the full horror (or the stupefying boredom) of today's line-up on the Pyramid Stodge.

BILLY BRAGG seems to appear at every festival ever. He's purpose-built for these events: portable, compact, and he shouts a lot at passers-by. But, given the gruel to follow, we grasp his romantic polemic like an umbrella in the rain, pausing only to visit the "green field" for that authentic Glasto experience. But it ain't fookin' green no more. Instead a pair of hands protrude from the earth beneath a sign that says "Deep Mud". Deep as in a mystic thinker? Maybe not.

Weird thought: what was going through **SHERYL CROW**'s mind when Eric Clapton asked her to "trade licks"? And was she as disappointed as I am?

It's widely believed that Sir **VAN MORRISON** of Portbelly plays every year when, in fact, he just plays, and plays, and plays, and every so often they erect a festival around him. Which is why Glastonbury is so big. As Van the "M(o)an" varies the mood from a slow blues to a marginally slower blues, entire generations commit suicide – sorry, drift over to watch Super Furries' genius set nearby. Meanwhile, Van just plays on, and on... Clearly a man who just don't give a f***.

6:35, waiting for Sting, Joe Walsh's "Life's Been Good" drifting politely from the PA... I haven't been so depressed in my *whole life*. Under the circumstances, I quite enjoy **STING**. No, really. I do. At least he has the decency to play a Greatest Hits set. At least (unlike every other act on today) he bothers to vibe the crowd up. And at least – conceptual alert – loads of policemen rush the stage during his set! And he plays "Synchronicity II". And "Roxanne"! And at least... Er, at least... oh, all right, maybe I don't enjoy Stink *that* much.

You've heard the rumours... Kraftwerk, Oasis, Bowie. Even The Cure wouldn't have been too bad. And now comes the moment to announce the SPECIAL GUESTS! And it's... **KULA SHAKER**! And **ASH**! And no **STEVE WINWOOD**, cos he's sick or something! "Wow," somebody says, sarcastically. And wouldn't you if you'd shelled out 75 notes for some strategically placed "bets" and you turned up losers like these (who played the night before, anyway)? In the true spirit of Glasto '97, nothing would get me to watch a bill like this again short of a £1,000.

Actually, make that £3,000. And, even then, I'm only thinking about it.

DAVE SIMPSON

SECOND STAGE

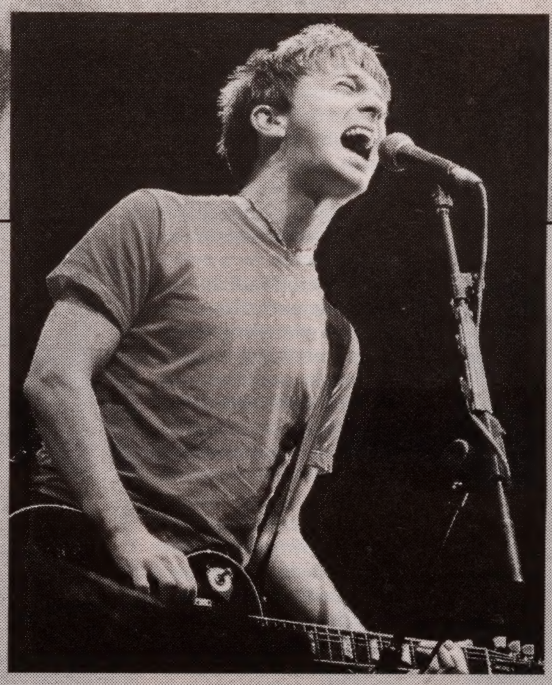
WELL, here we are. It's Sunday, it's sleepy and, look, there's **GORKY'S ZYGOTIC MYNCI**! Their sound is a fitting one for the mole-like revellers who crawl out into the daylight, sleepy and twitching, and their mixture of maudlin, cheery and surreal even nearly persuades the sun to come out. Well, nearly.

THE SUPERNATURALS stroll on and burst into "I'm An Idiot" and, suddenly, everything goes Bowie/Queen-shaped, which is obviously a good thing. They prove that they aren't necessarily the throwaway pop band which everyone has written them off as and, despite their stale country and western meanderings, The Supernaturals are very fresh today.

What we really need at this moment though, are a motley bunch of hoodlums to get the party stomping. And who better than **3 COLOURS RED**? F*** the pub rock tag – today it's "Mud Rock" and, as "Nerve Gas" kicks in, the mud clots start flying. Big time. "Through Breeze" hints at their more delicate side (which 1998 is going to adore) and, today, these chaps were never more needed.

SYMPOSIUM follow and begin as they mean to go on – with a riot. Born to kick the shit out of such a situation, Symposium reign supreme. The songs are out of tune, as are the harmonies... but wouldn't yours be with rocks flying at your head? "Fair Weather Friend" fairly skanks and "The Answer To Why I Hate You" shows that fraggle pop has finally burned its baggy shorts and begun listening to the best of US and UK punk rock.

Pink Floyd had their moments, but this is getting silly. **SUPER FURRY ANIMALS** seem like space cadets as they start to drift through a couple of songs. But wait, they're actually damn good. Gruff and the boys successfully mess with the minds of Glastonbury without resorting to half-arsed Kula Shaker-isms. "Herman Loves Pauline" sounds scrappy but "God! Show Me Magic" and "Something For The Weekend" are the very depths of hedonism while, for four minutes, "The Man Don't Give A F***" is the ultimate protest song for the jilted congregation. Great surrealist between-song banter as well.



PAVEMENT seem somewhat out of place – perhaps they're too clean, but their sound just doesn't carry today. On "Cut Your Hair", they manage to sound like Minor Threat jamming at Harvard with The Cardigans – but surely that could only be a good thing? Couldn't it? Anyone? Pavement draw the short straw: it's neither light nor dark, dry nor wet and, while "Stereo" gets the masses shuffling, that's as far as it goes.

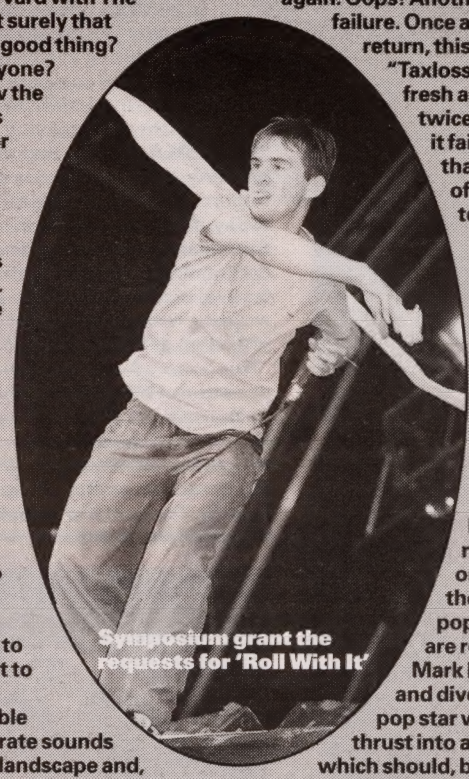
On the flipside of the college rock dime come **LIVE**, a band who play like they've got everything to prove and, rather remarkably, they manage to sell their intelligently depressed rock to those who want to care. Singer Ed Unpronounceable provides desperate sounds for a desperate landscape and, when he sings, *"Freedom was a party for the hippies to ruin"*, we smile and wink and take another swig.

I have never liked **ECHOBELLY**... and now I hate them. I hate their grinning faces, I hate their complete and utter disgusting indie-ness, I hate their lack of aspiration and I even hate the way I feel bad for slagging them off. You'd think that, after a lengthy absence, they would have at least progressed a little. Uh-uh. "I Can't Imagine The World Without Me", "Insomniac", new single, "The World Is Flat" – what an almighty slab of student union torture.

MANSUN are a band whom I've been waiting to see for ages, as have half the festival judging by the sizeable crowd. They slip into the glam-sham of "Stripper Vicar" and everything is kicking nicely. "Mansun have haphazardly come far," I scribble, "but how far will they go?" Well, two songs as it happens, before everything breaks down. They return and begin playing again. Oops! Another power failure. Once again they return, this time with "Taxloss" sounding fresh as a daisy and twice as pretty. Then it fails *again*. And that's it. They're off. Modern technology, eh?

So, it's left to **THE BLUETONES** to see off Glastonbury with a ball-breaking, explosive finale of sound, sight and sin. Hang on, this is The Bluetones, right? Yeah, only kidding, they play jangling pop. The singles are rolled out as Mark Morriss ducks and dives like a minor pop star who has been thrust into a limelight which should, by rights, be occupied by far greater talents on a night like this. People like Suede or The Manics, perhaps; some other band with a sizeable back-catalogue, yet who remain threatening and lean. The Bluetones finish with a flutter rather than a bang and it's just not enough. Shame really.

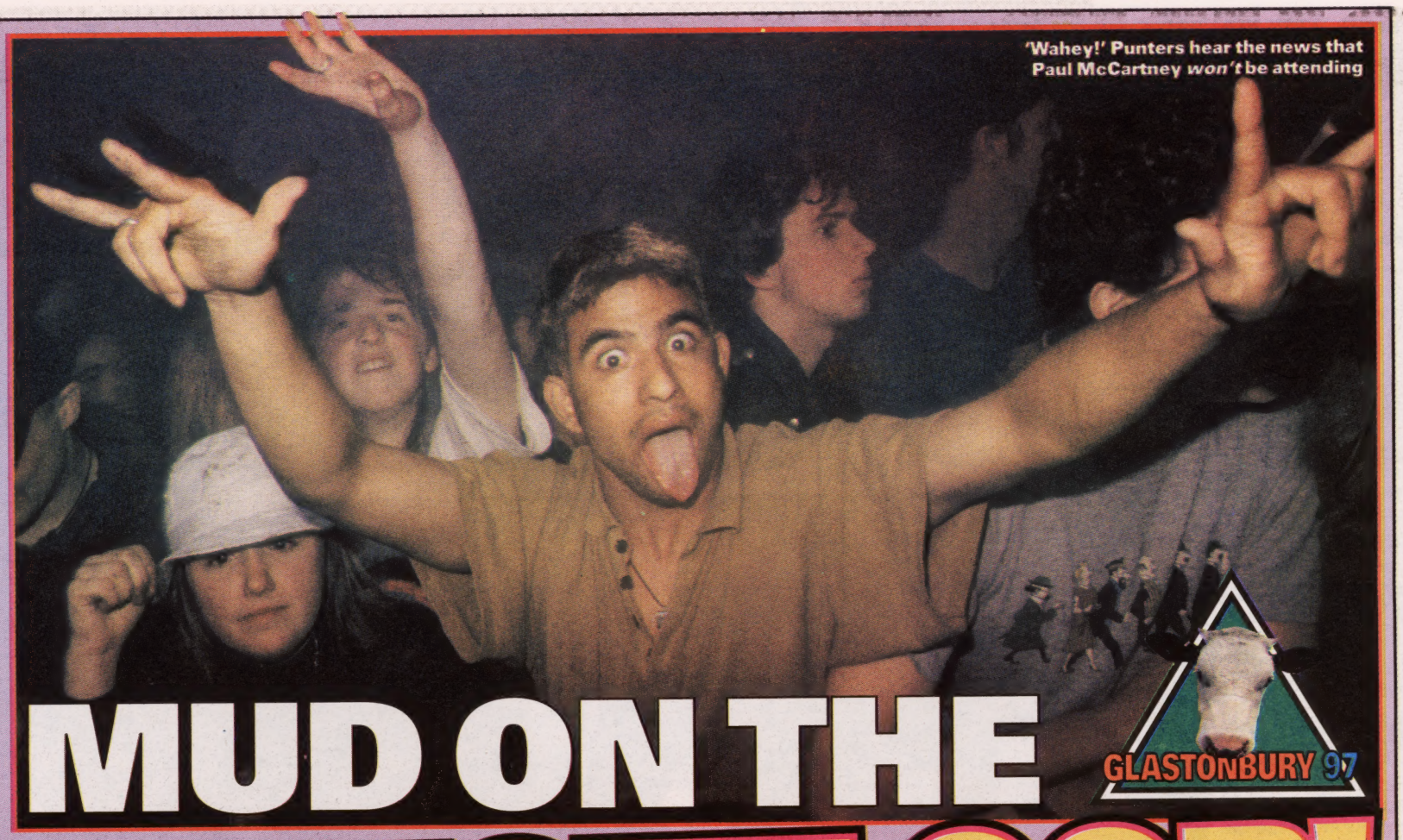
BEN MYERS



Symposium grant the requests for 'Roll With It'

'Alright!' Sonya Echobelly is informed she's missed out on the Sheryl Crow experience

DANCE TENT AND JAZZ ARENA



'Wahey!' Punters hear the news that Paul McCartney *won't* be attending

MUD ON THE DANCEFLOOR!

GLASTONBURY 97

FRIDAY

ROCK has a fine tradition of mud. Mud is a part of rock's heritage. The dirt fests of the Sixties, Woodstock a disaster area, the grinning loons covered from head to foot in the stuff leering at you from the cover of this very organ every year come festival season. Rock is mud. M**. But dance music? It's going to be a long weekend. . .

THE APHEX TWIN is first up. He sits on his little riser, twiddling his knobs, looking like a gnomic Vietnam grunt in his army surplus cape. We love the bouncing ball kick drum madness, we get bored with the ambient doodle. Love the lush string-soaked melodies, are mildly entertained by the two men romping around in ill-fitting teddy bear suits (there should have been three, but one of them had overindulged in the old Glasters cheroots).

This was the Dance Tent; under canvas and easy to get to. The other dance stage, the Jazz Arena, was approximately 53 miles away, just outside Bath. With 400 million gallons of m** and even more buffoons in hats with bells on between us and our destination, it was always going to be tough. We make it in something less than three hours, to be confronted by Michael Franti's **SPEARHEAD** celebrating the recent release of some Black Panther guy. **MASSIVE ATTACK**, headlining and on nearly two hours late at 1am, were always on a loser if they wanted to engulf the place in their usually overwhelming style, not least because they had to turn the volume down. Festivals: pah!

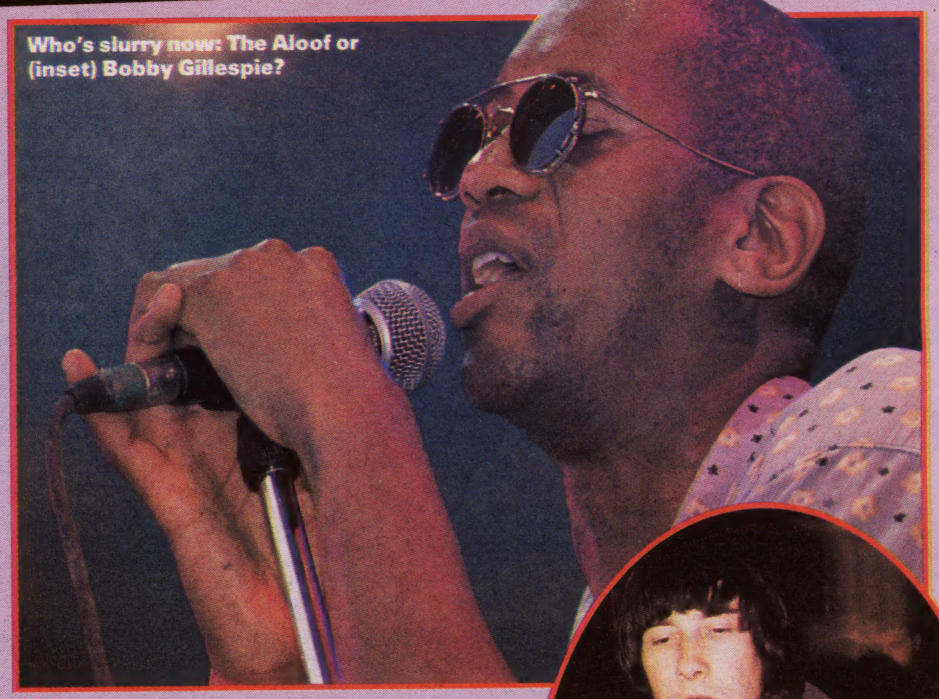
Day one over with not much to show for it except a headful of booze and boots caked with shite. Can I go home now?

SATURDAY

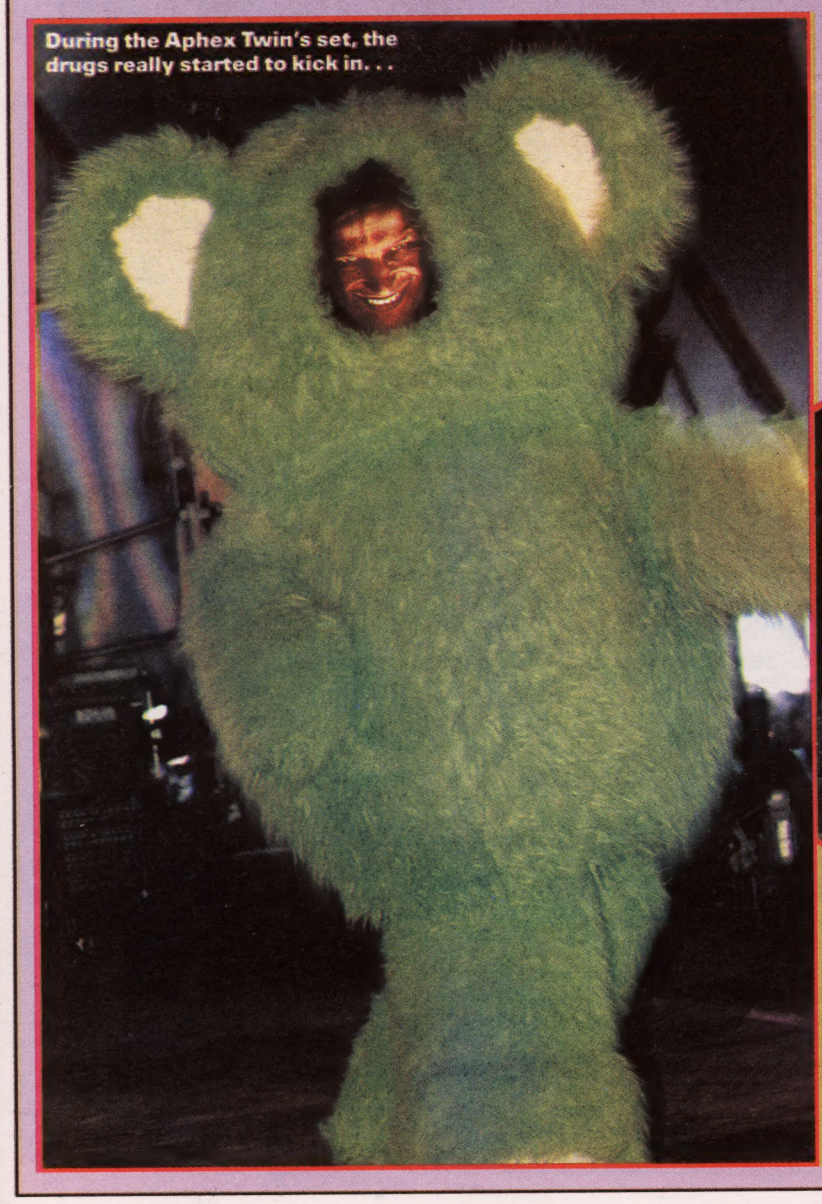
IT was down to **DEATH IN VEGAS** to provide the festival equivalent, at around 2pm, of some lively Saturday morning telly. They are allowed to be at Glastonbury and will work at any number of festivals because they a) have toured with The Chemical Brothers and b) use guitars. Incidentally, it's good to see that Steve Hellier has succumbed to the savage techno haircut.

They get off to a nicely ominous start, slug-slow and doom laden, but it's the big-ass beats and headbutt kick drums which send the crowd mad as Death In Vegas actually manage to create an atmosphere in a situation that, in all honesty, should be reserved for trapeze artists.

Another long schlepp to the so-called Jazz Arena (went there five times, got lost five times) for **THE ALOOF**, a band who get better each time I see them. Hardcore caners to a man, so I'm told, they're bound to please this crowd of drug-addled festival mong-outs with titles like "Hot Knives At Lunchtime". And so they do. Low-slung guitars and Ricky Barrow's stage craft (somewhere between Bruce Lee for his sudden violent moves, and Ozzy Osbourne for his enthusiastic air-guitar playing) push the cool quotient pretty high. Their lyrics, obsessing over the tragically mundane, have their draining impact – there's no grandiose concepts clouding the sentiment behind *"I wanted you to leave, I wanted you to go without a trace"*, or, indeed, the self-loathing of "One Night Stand" – not that they play it, much to the despair of the bloke next to me who spent the entire set bellowing for it. You couldn't be blamed for expecting disaster for The Aloof being a mud bath party band, but they expand into the role, actually filling the void created by the appalling conditions.



Who's slurry now: The Aloof or (inset) Bobby Gillespie?



During the Aphex Twin's set, the drugs really started to kick in. . .

PRIMAL SCREAM were due on after Armand Van Helden, and herein lies the essential festival conflict. The dance tent, indoors and relatively dry and m** free, was home to the better dressed punter. The robo scans and Armand's wax spinning had the packed tent in something close to your actual full-on club experience. Wide eyes with vast deep pools for pupils were the order of the day. And into this relatively blissful situation blunder Primal Scream. They make little attempt at the crowd-pleasing option which they could so easily pull off. It soon becomes apparent that to truly appreciate them, we need to have consumed more drugs than they have. They freewheel through their itinerary of dub rawk, including a disappointing reading of "Higher Than The Sun", while the set closer, "Kowalski", was reduced to the its thunderous essentials, losing the sonic pleasure to be had from the recorded version. There's no doubt that Primal Scream are as cool as f*** but, with the aimless iconography of the slide show (Elvis, some riots, Johnny Rotten, James Brown, more riots etc) and the lack of the studio's sonic sophistication, you're left with Primal Scream the dub doodlers or Primal Scream the dance rock muthas. Still very good but, somehow, should be a lot better.

Death In Vegas: Slop rockin' beats

SUNDAY

THE last day, **JIMI TENOR** is making a valiant attempt to entertain the Jazz Arena. There was always the risk that he was going to fall utterly flat but Tenor takes the sparse crowd with him through his uniquely odd take on jazz weirdness and synth poundings. He finishes with a keyboard on his head. Top man.

Headlining the dance tent, **DAFT PUNK** are mashing the packed gaff into their palms. Their ability to excite the buggery out of masses of people (and there are masses, the place is considerably more rammed than it was 24 hours ago for the comparatively lumpen Primals) is astounding. It's almost dull to say it, but you really shoulda been there, man. To lift me out of the grotesque m**-fuelled depression that I had floundered into before they came on was an act of charity for which I will love them forever. And I never thought I'd say that to a Frenchman. Thank you and goodnight.

MARK ROLAND

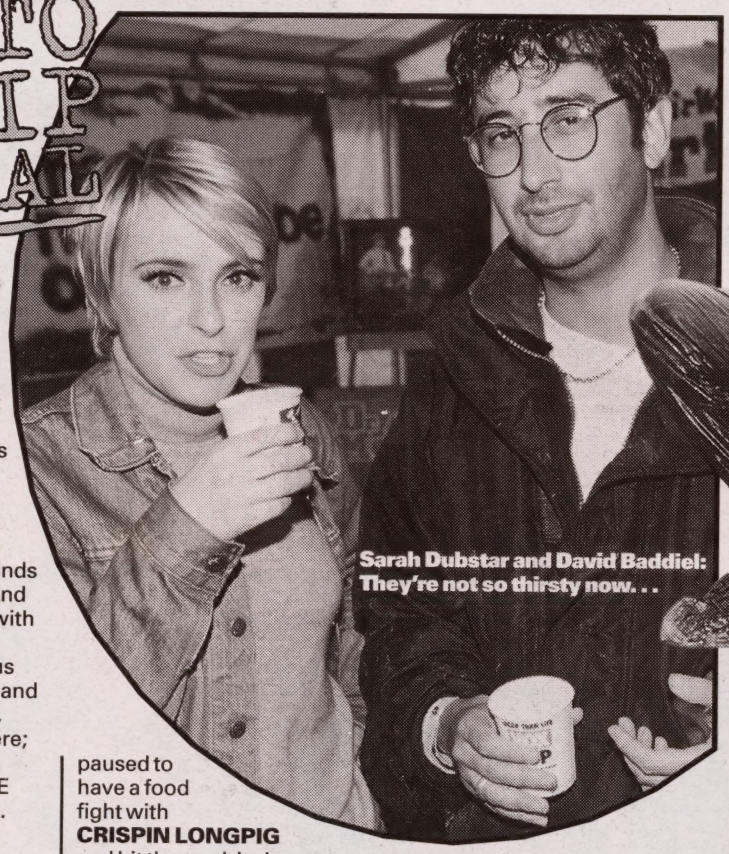
Beer Here Now: **NEIL KULKARNI** Star spotter: **PIERS ALLARDYCE**

MUD, SWEAT AND BEERS

GLASTONBURY 97

GLASTO GOSSIP SPECIAL

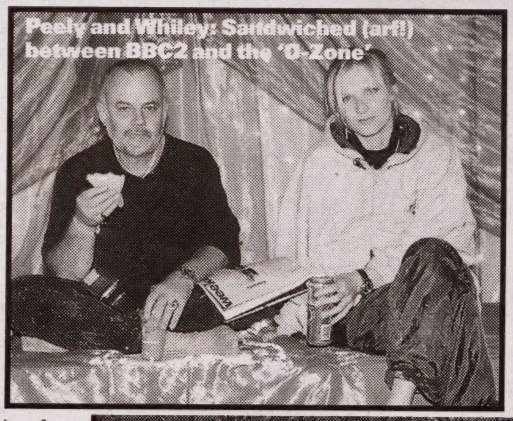
POP STARS? Wusses the lot of them. There we were, nursing our triple Pernod'n'creme de menths, our mud-repellent eye-liner cracking under the strain, our Harvey Nick's placcy-bag shoes (hey, we slummed it, but with style) wedged in enough filth to drown a giraffe, our hangovers stripping our minds of any last shred of sanity, and where were the stars? Out with the kids, mud-slinging and grooving? Backstage with us chumps braving the lavvys and boozing like good 'uns? No, we'll tell you where they were; GETTING THE F*** OUTTA DODGE THE FIRST CHANCE THEY GOT, THE MILKSOPS. **KENICKIE** set the trend; realising the stage they were playing was last seen floating towards the coast, the 'Nick changed from their glam-gear into sensible waterproofs, paused to have a food fight with **CRISPIN LONGPIG** and hit the road Jack, pronto. Clever devils. **CRISPIN** (whose MP dad made an appearance on the main stage talking about how "British pop music is a great export" before introducing **SMASHING PUMPKINS**) turned up later on Radio 1 and made **JO WHILEY**'s show that little bit more interesting by swearing a full 16 times in as many seconds. Foul-mouthed c***, there's no f***ing need for it. Retuning our dials to Avalon On-Site Radio in disgust we hear **DODGY**, out of their faces and babbling incoherently for a full hour, accusing **THOM YORKE** of having to go offstage in between each Radiohead song to "chop and snort". Can't think what they mean. Backstage Friday, **SUPERGRASS** and **THE PRODIGY** held a shouting match along the lines of "OUR SET WAS BETTER THAN YOURS" which threatened to turn nasty until a rousing chorus of "YOU WERE BOTH SHITE" won hands down. Most amusing, and intensely gratifying, sight of



Sarah Dubstar and David Baddiel: They're not so thirsty now. . .

My Life Story: In the bargain bins already, chaps?

Chris Helme: 'They shoot Shirehorses, don't they?'



Peely and Whiley: Sandwiched (arf!) between BBC2 and the 'O-Zone'

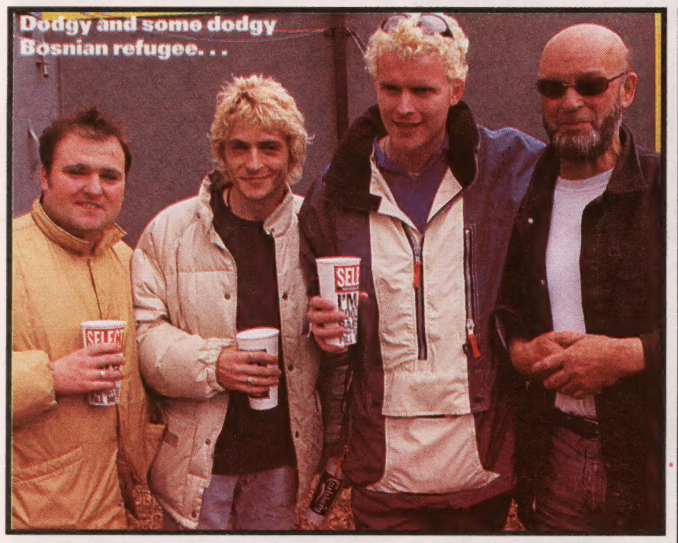
Ash and Kenickie : Mud as f**

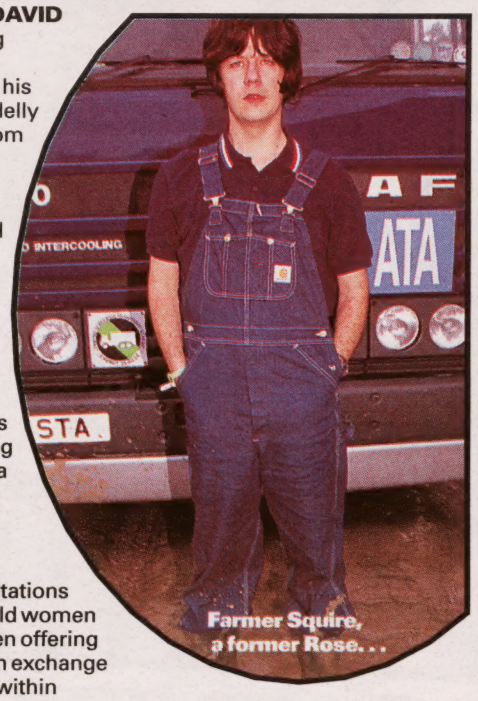
BLAG WIN! WIN! WIN!

MAKER'S MARK BOURBON! MMMMM!

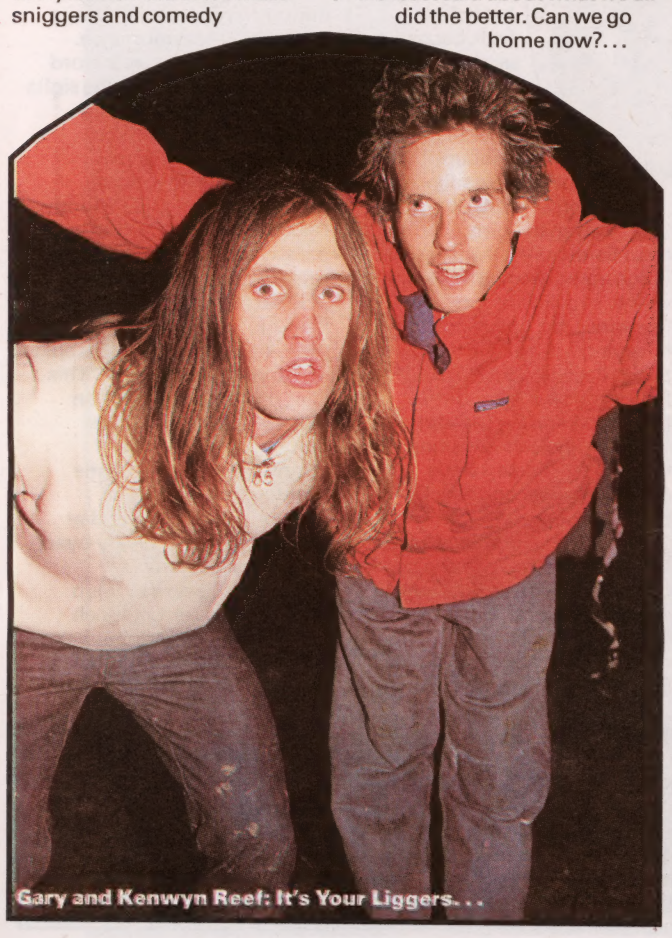
WHAT? You don't think we here at Blag rest for the festival season do ya? Ooh lordy, no. We've been here in the wind and the rain and the mud for a few days now, and we've got to admit it, we're cold. Very cold. That is, we were until we got stuck into the Maker's Mark Bourbon. It's a godsend; relaxes the shoulders, warms the lips, and gives a warm rosy glow that starts in the stomach and then spreads out over the soul in a way that Ready Break never did. It's pretty much saved our lives this weekend, we're in love with the stuff, and so we've got together with Maker's Mark to offer you the chance to sample this fine bourbon, as enjoyed and endorsed by top pop stars. All you have to do is answer these TWO simple questions; One – In which of the following years did Glastonbury NOT happen? Was it (a) 1991 (b) 1993 or (c)1996. Question Two– In which of the following years did Glastonbury start? (a)1974; (b) 1975 or (c) Who cares, I got the first one right didn't I? Send your answers to "MAKER'S MARK COMPETITION", Melody Maker, 26th Floor, King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London SE1 9LS; the first six outta the bag get ONE 70cl bottle of Maker's Mark Bourbon, ONE Maker's Mark T-shirt and a natty Maker's Mark baseball cap. Good luck, you have to be over 18 to enter(we'll check and if you're underage, we'll tell your mum who'll probably go MAD!!). The editor's decision is on the rocks but assuredly final.

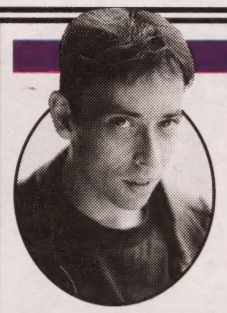
See, Jake likes it


Dodgy and some dodgy Bosnian refugee. . .


Farmer Squire, a former Rose. . .

the weekend was **DAVID BADDIEL**, walking amongst the great unwashed, finding his relatively pristine Helly Hanson's pelted from all sides with an avalanche of mud so determined HE COULDN'T LAUGH IT OFF. The kids have spoken, speccy. Full marks also to the lone hero who pelted **CAST's JOHN POWER** continuously for his entire set, reasoning to police that, "I'm a scouser bizzie, I'm allowed to." Too right mate. **JOE STRUMMER** was causing mass palpitations amongst 40-year-old women all over the site, even offering one old dear £500 in exchange for her mini-trailer within which sat a baby. Whether that price included the perplexed infant we're not sure but one question does occur. What the f*** is Joe Strummer doing with that much money? Fashion victims of the weekend; **JADE JAGGER** who soon found out that a crushed velvet catsuit was NOT a good idea, **CERYS CATATONIA** who tottered on high heels in an act of folly that bordered on the insane, and a bloke of no fixed moniker who walked around the entire site with a toilet seat on his head screaming "I'M FULL OF SHIT" at anyone who came anywhere near him. Star. OBERSTER BAUFUHRER **CRISPIAN MILLS** gave us all a larf on Saturday night, swanning through the site with an entourage of sarong-wearing acolytes who attracted mass sniggers and comedy goose-stepping everywhere they went. Then **THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS** surprised us all by whipping out spoons and a harmonica backstage to give us an authentic cockernee rendition of "Underneath The Arches" (according to Tom the next LP will be produced by Chas of Chas'N'Dave fame, no shit). The **CLIFF RICHARD** is dead rumour did the rounds yet again; **PRIMAL SCREAM** got into the spirit of things by caking themselves in mud head to foot, bless 'em whilst a drug-addled psychopath with an alarming similarity to our own **NEIL KULKARNI** barred a worried-looking **DANNY SUPERGRASS** from entering the backstage bar because, "that last LP you did was f***ing shit mate". Then again, the least said about what we all did the better. Can we go home now?. . .


Gary and Kenwyn Reef: It's Your Liggers. . .



THE WEEKLY SESSION

Going deaf for a living with STEVE LAMACQ

"THERE is a Dunkirk spirit here," said Michael Eavis on the television. Not a bad analogy considering that Glastonbury '97 was both very wet and resembled a warzone. In years to come, adverts for the Territorial Army will feature footage from this year's Glastonbury. Even some of the broadsheet coverage resembled reports from Vietnam with journalists and photographers claiming to have been caught in the cross-fire as mud-slinging battles won new ground for advancing crowds of Levellers fans.

In fact the main problem for reporters was trying to find new ways of describing mud. There are 1,368 references to the Glasto mud in this issue alone, but my favourite description of the Somme-like conditions came from our own Charlie Lycett - our teenage Radio 1 hero, who in normal wartime conditions would have been sent home with nothing less than a Victoria Cross. Peering out from the BBC "Village" – a ramshackle collection of trucks and portacabins – Charlie summed up the muddy scene as looking like "a chicken korma without the chicken". Actually the mud was dark enough to be a madras but who's going to argue with a line like that (later filched by various journalists, all claiming they were there first).

Anyway, I've been told that people might be interested in how the Radio 1 crew coped with the Glasto experience so this was the score. "The Evening Session" team arrived on site at 5pm on Thursday – after a mere hour and a half in the traffic queue, which was nothing compared to John Peel's three-hour journey from Shepton Mallet, which he could have walked in a third of the time – even with his boxes of happy hardcore 12-inchers. Allegedly Peel tried to start a singalong in his car, coaxing his passengers into a quick chorus of "Abide With Me", but probably settled for an a cappela version of The Fall's "Hit The North" instead.

Our truck was in the usual position in the field just behind the Pyramid stage, and just where the mud was at its thickest and trickiest – prompting the technical crew to ban us from wearing boots in the studio. I now know the intimate details of everyone's sock collection. The really valiant people at outside broadcasts like this are the soundcrew who work 12-hour plus shifts recording all the live music, while we squeeze into a shoebox and play a few records, and try to capture some of the "colour" of the festival itself. Luckily we got hold of a 1967 Scout handbook which provided endless material – particularly in the chapter headed "Under Canvas". Here's some of the useful information which you could apply to Glastonbury. Tip One: "Make sure you're neat, tidy and clean before you enter the camp site." WHATTT? Tip Two (which comes under a sub-heading of "What Shall We Do?"). "Help the landowner; try fishing for your supper; invite the owner over to dinner.") Quite what Michael Eavis would have made of us inviting him into the mobile studio for red wine and crisps is anyone's guess, and fishing was out of the question, unless it was fishing for gossip with the bedraggled series of pop people who filed solemnly through the backstage area, searching for a good time.

There were a few decent people around though who helped cheer us up along the way, including Brian from Placebo, who described his recent tour of Japan as like "being in The Beatles", Zoe Ball, who was camping in the mud "over that way, near the back", and Crispin Longpig who helped us out with some of our Somme similies. Well played to you all. What with work and stuff I didn't get to see half the bands I wanted to, but Beck – as I'm sure everyone is saying – was great. Even when he he was hit by the mud, he rolled with it, and came back up fighting. A class act.

Nah Steve, that's Zoe, not Jo. . .

ON top of the radio duties, I was asked to present a piece about the Glasto dance tent for BBC 2 – although dancing was strictly out of the question for me. Not because of the sludge that lapped round the tent, but because my own attempts at dancing usually resemble a chip-shop drunk who's having trouble taking his coat off.

Out of the blue, Monkey Mafia had been invited to DJ in the Hospitality Tent, where he was mixing up some exciting sounding records, overdubbed with shouts of "two lagers and a pint of cider". We collared The Orb, who have just been to the States and report a decent response, and Dreadzone, who in many ways are the classic Glastonbury fest band, and later went down a storm (particularly with the Endsleigh league footy fans, who know them only for providing the theme tune for the late-night ITV soccer round-up that captures the glory and excitement of Fulham vs Wigan).

Then came the difficult "Pieces To Camera" which you have to memorise and then recite without sounding like a Channel 4 continuity announcer – while sinking slowly into the mud and shouting above the man who will inevitably come up and shout "Hello mum" over your shoulder. I didn't see the finished feature, so for all I know, it may have ended up on the cutting room floor, although if it did make transmission, I hope they left in the close up of the old DMs, which were ceremonially laid to rest on Monday morning, just before the trench foot set in.

The Melody Maker crew get down to work in the press tent

TV Critic: **NEIL MASON** Toilet Rolls: **MARTYN STRICKLAND**

WHERE WERE YOU WHILE WE WERE GETTING DRY?!

So, you are back home again, tucked up in bed, bad dose of the snivels. Your shoes are f*ed, your bones a bit soggy. Well, let us show you the alternative way to to saviour the delights of Glastonbury. Come, follow us...**

IT was the short straw job.

"We're all going to Glastonbury," the office announced with glee. "We need someone to recreate the experience in their front room. You know, take in the TV and radio coverage, eat cardboard pizza, run out of toilet paper... It'll be fun."

As I snuggle under my warm duvet on Friday morning, torrential rain lashing against the window, Radcliffe and Lard broadcast live from the site which is already ankle deep in mud and the expected 100,000 throng haven't even set foot in the blooming place yet.

By the time I manage to stop smirking at my good fortune (around dinner time), the stories are coming thick and fast. By the afternoon, vehicles are banned from the site, the second stage is sinking into the quagmire, a man who thinks he's a cow has been removed from a tree by the fire brigade and I am laughing like a drain. Which is what this year's Glastonbury could have done with actually.

Feeling duty-bound to enter into the spirit, I take a shower, fully clothed of course, and trudge around the house dripping all over the place while waiting for the television coverage to start. I wait and wait and wait. And then wait some more. Day turns to night and I'm still dripping and still waiting. Radio 1 seems to have forgotten it is covering the festival.

Likewise, BBC 2 is similarly nonplussed. Checking my TV guide, I discover a Glastonbury show tucked safely out of harms way at 12.45am. Not a good start.

'A man who thinks he's a cow has been removed from a tree by the fire brigade'

Ah, that new shampoo's on sale...

Finding myself hours adrift of any kind of coverage, it's time to provide my own entertainment. I dig out a pile of old bootlegs and on the newly-erected In Your Dreams stage, I manage to secure performances from The Smiths at Brixton Academy in 1986 followed by New Order from Glasto 1986 and headlining in my own front room are The Clash at Brixton's Fair Deal in 1982. Follow that BBC 2...

After another fully-clothed blast in the shower and a forlorn look at the toilet which I've been told is out of bounds, I lug the TV into the garden and get comfy in a flower bed. BBC 2 finally roll out an extraordinarily relaxed Peel and bare-footed Jo Whiley reclining on an inflatable sofa in front of a blazing camp fire. Peel tells stories of muddy festivals while Jo keeps warm by curling up and smiling nicely.

To my disappointment, Glasto doesn't look nearly as bad as I'd hoped. I expected to see people knee-deep in mud looking really miserable. They aren't and they don't. The sweetest couple on TV, Jayne Middlemiss and Jamie Theakstone, trade "O-Zone" wisecracks. "We're mud for it," Audioweb tell them. "Mud, sweat and tears?" asks Jamie. "Dunkirk spirit," says upside-down head man and Glasto godfather, Michael Eavis. The police, in a rare display of humour, claim they are really, really looking forward to Terrorvision. Jamie finds a group of friends who rather charmingly have a boys' tent and a girls' tent. They keep saying they are from Derry as if it is some sort of excuse.

As the night chill takes a grip, The Prodigy, who look more and more like the Sex Pistols everyday, bookend the show with "Smack My Bitch Up" and "Firestarter" while decorating the screen throughout this first blast of BBC Glasto are Status Quo for the Nineties, Reef, the weirdie-woo wonderfulness of Beck, a rousing performance from Supergrass and Smashing Pumpkins who scare the shit out of everyone as usual.

While I'm admiring the huge crowd, one of the great Glastonbury mysteries hits home. How *do* you find your tent? As the BBC coverage winds up, I take a bus ride and then try to find my way back home... blindfolded. After falling into a canal twice, I find I'm hopelessly lost and end up sleeping under a tree. Enough is enough and I decide that being soaking wet, starving hungry, covered in mud, sleeping rough and refusing to wash or use a toilet for three days may be some people's idea of fun but it certainly isn't mine. After a somewhat satisfying session on the lav, a steaming hot bubble bath, bacon sandwiches and tea out of a proper cup, it's time for the Glastonbury At Home experience to come into its own.

...Go and Wash

Fortunately, my Glasto has a Sainsbury's. With the fridge now groaning under the weight of delicious food and fine wines, the bathroom floor-to-ceiling with quilted toilet paper, the telly back in its rightful place, the central heating on and the smell of fresh-ground coffee wafting through the house, I settle down for the second leg of BBC 2's coverage.

The Saturday morning show sees Jamie and Jayne pop up on a truly bizarre programme called "Menzone". After Colonel John Blashford-Snell (a man clearly caught in a British Empire time-warp) has talked about tigers for 10 minutes, we get down to... re-runs of everything we saw last night! If I have to listen to Reef do that "It's Your Letters "song again, I'll do as I'm told for the rest of the year. The saving grace is Ian McCulloch who turns in a dazzling performance stating he loathes festivals and is insulted that the Bunnies had to play at minutes after noon, what with his band being the best band ever! Oh, the indignity of it all...

Radio 1 fares better with an uninterrupted 17 and a half hours of coverage. The Longpigs take to the stage during Jo Whiley's show for a blatantly live performance. "You wait for one swear word and 37 come at once," she sighs afterwards. Steve Lamacq hits the airwaves and very kindly mentions that my reviewing Glasto at home seems like an easy job. Bloody right it is mate and before you get any ideas, I've already put my bid in for next year.

BBC 2 grabs the baton from Peel and Mary Anne Hobbs and their late-night coverage is split in two with the repeat of "This Life". How much better can this damn thing get? After partying to the sounds of Danny Rampling and Anne Nightingale who take us through until six on Sunday morning, I awake, bleary-eyed, only to discover my Glastonbury also has a pub which serves sunday lunch and beer at a reasonable price... in a glass. See you at my place next year I guess.

THE MELODY MAKER GLASTONBURY '97 FRONTLINE REPORT WAS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

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